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Government  
Publications



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Nº 46

ISSN 1180-2987

## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 41<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 27 February 2017

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 27 février 2017



Speaker  
Honourable Dave Levac

Président  
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk  
Todd Decker

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Todd Decker

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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 February 2017

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 février 2017

*The House met at 1030.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

*Prayers.*

### MEMBER FOR YORK CENTRE

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Just before we begin, I would like to draw your attention to the return of the member from York Centre and welcome him back to the Legislature. We're glad for his convalescence.

We all wish you well on your recovery.

### RACHEL HOMAN

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Point of order: the member from Nepean–Carleton.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I, too, would like to congratulate the member for joining us back here today. It's always wonderful to see him.

But also, I want, on behalf of the residents of the city of Ottawa, and in particular those of us who live in the west end, to congratulate the Scotties Tournament of Hearts winner, Rachel Homan, and her arena, for doing what she does so well, which is be the best curler in the entire country.

Congratulations, Rachel, on behalf of this entire assembly.

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** I'm happy to say that I have three ShinShinim who are here, who are currently working in Thornhill. They're doing a gap year between high school and the army, from Israel. Amir Bernbach, from Kiryat Tivon, is a ShinShin at Associated Hebrew Schools and Beit Rayim Synagogue and School, where I belong. Ayellet Shalit, from Shoam, is a ShinShinit at Leo Baeck Day School (North), Temple Har Zion and BYYO. Bitya Shemla, from Adora, is a ShinShinit at Netivot HaTorah Day School, Shaarei Shomayim and Bnei Akiva. Great to see you here.

**Hon. Steven Del Duca:** It's my pleasure to introduce some guests that I believe we have here today: Lee Balzar, Roni Barouch, Aviv Shabo and Zane Colt, from the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee. The students themselves are part of a group called the ShinShinim and are young Israeli leaders who defer their army service for one year to volunteer in the GTA,

including at schools and synagogues in Vaughan. They are visiting Queen's Park as part of their "take charge for a day" program. Please join me in welcoming them.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'd like to welcome the mayor of sunny Sundridge here, Mr. Lyle Hall, who is down for the Ontario Good Roads Association meeting and is in the members' west gallery.

**Hon. Dipika Damerla:** Today the page captain is Konstantina Tsotos from the great riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. To support her, we have parents Panayiota and Demetrios, brothers Evangelos and Ioannis, grandparents Konstantina and Angelos, uncle Nickolaos, principal Zbig Anuszkiewicz and vice-principal Tracy Tait. Please warmly welcome all of them.

**Mr. Monte McNaughton:** I'm honoured to have friends from back in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex in Queen's Park today, representing the municipality of Brooke-Alvinston. We have Mayor Don McGugan, his wife Ann McGugan, Councillors Frank Nemcek and Jeannette Douglas, and Joanne Powers. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**M. Arthur Potts:** C'est un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques. Bienvenue.

They're having their lobby day today, a reception, at 5 o'clock in the legislative dining room. You're all welcome. Thanks for being here.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** Wildrose Party member of the legislative assembly, Mr. Prasad Panda from Calgary–Foothills, is visiting us from Alberta today.

**L'hon. Mitzie Hunter:** J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques.

I would like to welcome Jean Lemay, Benoit Mercier, Melinda Chartrand and Helen Vigneault.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I would like to welcome the members from the eastern Ontario French Catholic school board who met with me this morning: François Bazinet, Martial Levac, Sergine Rachelle Bouchard, François Turpin and Jean Lemay.

**Hon. Laura Albanese:** I am honoured to introduce grades 9 and 10 students from Weston Collegiate Institute in the great riding of York South–Weston and their teacher Michael Anthony. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. James J. Bradley:** [Inaudible] l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques: Melinda Chartrand, Benoit Mercier, Dominique Janssens, Caroline Bourret, Geneviève Grenier.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I just want to take the opportunity to wish a good friend a happy 65th anniversary. I know he's watching this and I appreciate it—and that's Bruce Davis.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I want to welcome the municipal leaders from Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry, along with the conservation authority that we met with this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park and the city of Toronto.

**Hon. Eleanor McMahon:** I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park members of Architectural Conservancy Ontario to the Ontario Legislature for the third annual Heritage Day at Queen's Park. Representatives include many today but I'll highlight a few, if I may: Catherine Nasmith, president; Leslie Thompson, first vice-president; Richard Longley, past president; and Will Coukell, chief operating officer. I'd like to invite all members of this House to their reception this evening from 4:30 to 5:30 in room 230.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I want to introduce a guest of page Radin Vahid-Banasaz. His father, Hossein Vahid-Banasaz, is with us in the House.

**Hon. Chris Ballard:** I am delighted to introduce Gordon Prentice, a former member of the UK Parliament for Pendle and a resident of Newmarket—Aurora.

1040

**Hon. Kathryn McGarry:** I do want to say welcome to the ACO members, in particular Jean Haalboom from Waterloo region, and Susan Ratcliffe from Guelph, whom I've worked with for many, many years. Welcome to Queen's Park.

#### DONALD COUSENS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of International Trade on a point of order.

**Hon. Michael Chan:** Point of order, Speaker: I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence before question period as a sign of this House's condolences for the passing of Don Cousins, former mayor of Markham and York Centre MPP.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The minister is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence for the passing of Mr. Cousins. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members in the entire Legislature to stand for a moment of silence.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Prince—Edward Hastings on a point of order.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** I seek unanimous consent to bring forward a motion without notice on electricity transparency: that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Excuse me. I have to do the first part first.

The member from Prince—Edward Hastings is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** My question is for the Premier. In 2011, the Auditor General pointed out the government's energy policies were disastrous, but it took until last week for the Minister of Energy to actually come clean and admit it. Why did it take six years—six years—for the Liberals to acknowledge the damage they've done?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I think the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that there have been investments that have been made in the electricity system in Ontario that were absolutely necessary—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order. And if I'm going to read that as an indication of the House's demeanour today, I'll ramp it up.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Without the other comments, please. Thank you.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** With the shutdown of the coal-fired plants, the jump-starting of a renewable industry, investments in transmission lines across the province—investments in a system that had been degraded because of a lack of investment by previous governments.

For months now we have been working to find ways to take costs out of the system. We have renegotiated contracts, like the contract with Samsung. We've made decisions not to invest in new nuclear, which will save billions of dollars to the system. We know that there's more that has to be done. We'll be bringing our plan forward soon.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Back to the Premier: The Minister of Energy actually went off his Liberal talking points and said, I quote—this is what the Minister of Energy said: "Hindsight is 20/20" when it comes to Premier Wynne's disastrous energy policies. Hindsight is 20/20, but hindsight doesn't put money back into people's pockets. Hindsight doesn't turn the lights on. Hindsight doesn't make it easier for seniors to choose between heating and eating.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: The Minister of Energy says that hindsight is 20/20. Does the Premier agree that her policies have been disastrous, or is this just more talking points?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** This is a very, very important issue. It's an important issue to people and businesses across the province. But I have to say that I think the Leader of the Opposition has embellished what the Minister of Energy said just a bit. The Minister of Energy is very supportive of the fact that we're saving \$4 billion a year in health care costs because the coal-fired plants are shut down. The Minister of Energy and our whole

government are very supportive of the fact that we have a reliable, clean electricity grid in Ontario.

The reality is, those were decisions that were made in order to have a clean grid, in order to rebuild an electricity grid that was not reliable. Are there things that we could have done differently? Yes, of course there are. And hindsight is 20/20; we've acknowledged that.

But the reality is, today we know that more costs need to be taken out of the system. People need relief, and we're going to deliver that.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Start the clock.

Final supplementary.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Back to the Premier: The Minister of Energy's mea culpa was Friday. They've already forgotten it. They've already forgotten they said, "Hindsight is 20/20."

Well, the Minister of Energy actually said, "How did we get here?" And I'm going to answer that for the government—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** People are choosing between heating and eating.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member for Leeds-Grenville would be very helpful to the Speaker, when he's ready to stand up and tell the other side to stop, that he do.

Please finish your question.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, this may be a laughing matter for the Liberal benches, but it isn't. Ontarians are struggling. They can't afford their hydro bills.

The Minister of Energy said, "How did we get here?" on Friday. Let me answer that for him: the Green Energy Act; absurd executive salaries; cancelled gas plants; the fire sale of Hydro One; and giving away millions in free electricity to neighbouring states.

My question is this: If there really was a mea culpa, which one of those policies are you going to walk back? Is it the Green Energy Act? Is it the executive salaries? Is it the fire sale of Hydro One? Which one of your policies are you going to walk back?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** As I said, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue, and we are taking it extremely seriously. That's why we have to deal with the facts of the matter. We have to deal with the possible solutions that we are considering.

I've said I support what the Minister of Energy said. Hindsight is 20/20. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition would go back to when his party was in office and look at the decisions that were made during those years. Maybe he'd look at the sell-off of the 407 and the lack of benefit that came to the province of Ontario. Maybe he would look at the energy policies.

The reality is, we're dealing today in the reality that more needs to be done to give people relief, and we're going to do that.

## ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe this recent mea culpa will bring back the jobs and the investments that have fled Ontario?

In every part of this province, we have lost jobs and we have lost investment because of these destructive hydro policies. I hear the government heckling: "No, we haven't lost any jobs. We haven't lost any investment." They are dead wrong. We have lost investment. We have lost jobs.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: How are you going to get these jobs back that we've lost?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition seems to not recognize that Ontario actually is leading economic growth in the country. We're leading in job creation. We're outpacing the growth of OECD countries. In fact, in relative terms, Ontario is doing very well.

The reality is that there are parts of the province where they're not sharing in that economic growth as evenly as others. We recognize that. But the net new jobs, the net growth—Ontario is doing very, very well.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Back to the Premier: In this bubble of Queen's Park, the Premier may believe that Ontario is creating jobs. But you leave Queen's Park, you hear stories of businesses, and it's a very different reality.

On the weekend, I visited Ross Smibert, who is 89 years old and has run North Star Ice in London since 1954. In less than two years, his hydro bill has gone up \$100,000, or 55%. He employs 25 local London residents, but he said it would be cheaper to run his business in Michigan. He has poured his heart into this company for 63 years, and he's struggling to keep it in Ontario.

**1050**

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, all these jobs you say you're creating—what's your message to Ross Smibert, who is struggling to keep his business in Ontario because of your policies? What is your answer to him?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, whenever there is job loss in the province, obviously that affects the family and the community, and it's of serious concern. But the reality is that in Ontario we've created 697,600 net new jobs since the recession, 303,000 jobs since I became Premier, 28,000 new jobs just last month, and 2,000 tech jobs—net new jobs—in London. The reality is, there is job creation happening.

There are different jobs. I will absolutely acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that there is a change in our economy. We are going through a transition; that is a reality. But to suggest that there are not jobs being created is just not the fact. There are jobs being created in this province.

There are net new jobs, and our unemployment rate has been below the Canadian average for 22 months.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Final supplementary?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: The government's own cabinet documents say there are fewer jobs today relative to the population than before the recession; that's their documentation.

Let me share another story about how this is hurting jobs in Ontario. Mastronardi Produce Ltd. was awarded the Premier's agri-food innovation award, but the problem is, because of this government's policies, they had to move that award-winning project—that they got the Premier's award for—to Michigan. In fact, Mastronardi has now invested \$100 million since 2011 in Michigan. They're an Ontario family. They want to invest in Ontario but, because of this government's policies, they can't. They tell me they're worried now that all of their future investments are going to go to the US.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier created policies that are driving jobs, like the Mastronardi ones in southwestern Ontario, into the US and not into Ontario?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that facts still matter in this province. They may not matter to the Leader of the Opposition, but they matter to the people of this province, and they matter to our business community, who have—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I can.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Mr. Speaker, facts still matter. The fact is, 697,600 net jobs have been created in this province since the global recession—87.8% are full-time, 78.6% are above the average wage, and 75% are private sector jobs. Those are the facts. The Leader of the Opposition can deny them till the cows come home, but he's wrong. We're creating jobs in this province. We're at the lowest level of unemployment in Ontario that we've had in eight years.

That being said, our Premier cares about those areas that haven't kept up. So we're going to keep investing in our regional economic development funds. We're going to keep growing this province. We're going to keep—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. New question.

## HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. Families are at a breaking point in this province when it comes to keeping up with their skyrocketing hydro bills, people like Jane in Kingston, who has been forced to choose between groceries or electricity. She bought groceries and her hydro was cut off. It took a political

crisis for the Liberals to finally take winter disconnections like Jane's seriously.

What is it going to take for the Premier to address the root causes of those disconnections, stop just tinkering with the hydro system, and finally bring hydro prices under control?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I know that the leader of the third party knows that winter disconnections, in every part of the province, should not be happening now. If there is a situation where it's happening, I know the Minister of Energy would want to know about that.

Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly in this House that I understand that there are people across the province who are overburdened by their electricity costs. We have moved to reduce their costs by 8%, but we know there is more to be done. We will be bringing a plan forward. We're looking at all options, and we will be bringing a plan forward to do just that: to further reduce people's electricity costs across the province.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Electricity isn't a luxury, and it shouldn't be priced like one. People like Richelle in Smithville have had hydro bills so high that she is being forced to choose between filling the family's prescriptions or paying to keep the lights on. No mother should have to make that kind of choice.

The Liberals have had almost 14 years in government. They have put the interests of a small group of their well-connected friends ahead of Ontario families by selling off Hydro One, and selling out people like Richelle in the process. When will this Premier wake up and realize that she is hurting Ontario families?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The decisions that we have made to clean up the air by shutting down the coal-fired plants, to jump-start a renewables industry, to rebuild lines that had been neglected by governments of all stripes, investments that have not been made, those were decisions that had the people of Ontario at the heart of them—kids with asthma, people who needed reliable energy.

But we have acknowledged that there was a cost associated with those decisions that is hard for people to bear across the province. Electricity prices have gone up very quickly, and we have moved to reduce costs already. We're looking at all options to further reduce people's electricity costs. I look forward to bringing forward our plan in the very near future.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Final supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** People are trapped in a struggle every month to keep their family above water in this province. People like Jane and Richelle lie awake at night worried sick about how they're going to pay their hydro bill.

The Liberals have spent 14 years driving up hydro costs for families. Premier Wynne is doing more damage by selling off Hydro One and selling out control over our hydro system. Now that the hydro crisis for families has become a political crisis for the Liberal Party, will the

Premier finally admit her sell-off was a mistake and take some real action to lower people's electricity bills?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** We have been working to reduce costs in the electricity system for months—actually, years. We have worked with Samsung to make sure we renegotiated that contract. We have made sure that we made a decision not to invest in new nuclear, which saves billions of dollars into the future. We've put in place the Ontario energy support program to help people on low incomes. But we know that there's more to be done. We're looking at all options.

I really look forward to the response by the leader of the third party when we bring our plan forward, which will reduce people's electricity costs in the immediate term. I really look forward to her reaction, because I think that she should be very pleased with the plan that we're going to bring forward.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** As long as it's stopping the sell-off of Hydro One, Speaker, I'll be very pleased.

### HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is to the Premier. In fact, prices went up 50% since this Premier has been in office. Families need to see immediate relief and permanent change on their hydro bills. Rural and northern Ontarians are paying sky-high electricity bills, usually driven by delivery charges that are much higher than those that urban customers are paying. The Premier has had many chances to fix this unfairness; instead, she chose to watch rural Ontarians go broke trying to keep up with ever-rising hydro bills, hooking up their house's electricity to generators.

Will this Premier and her Liberal government immediately get rid of the premium that rural and northern families are paying on their hydro bills?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I'm very concerned about the additional burden that people in rural and northern communities carry because of distribution charges. I think that it is a huge concern. It's something that the Minister of Energy is working very hard at addressing. In fact, we have already begun to address that with an extra 12% reduction on top of the 8% reduction, but we know that, still, there is more that needs to be done.

It's interesting to me that the leader of the third party, in her leadoff to this latest question, said that as long as our plan stops the privatization, the broadening of the ownership, of Hydro One, then she'll be supportive. That is the one thing that would not take a penny off people's electricity bills. The one thing that the leader of the third party is interested in is an action that would not reduce people's electricity bills. We're looking for ways to reduce people's electricity bills.

1100

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's time for a government that gets what families are dealing with and takes action to make life easier for Ontarians. Mandatory time-of-use pricing may have made sense in theory, but it has shown

to do nothing more than punish seniors who need to keep the heat on at home during the day and busy families juggling work and their kids' after-school activities who can't fit all of their chores into off-peak hours. The Premier is punishing parents for cooking at dinnertime. That is not fair.

It's time for people to pay less on their hydro bills. People need relief now. Will this Premier immediately end mandatory time-of-use pricing?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** I'm pleased to rise to talk about how what the IESO, our system operator, has been hard at, is doing exactly that. They're looking at market reform. One of the things that we've been talking about with market reform is making sure that there are opportunities for choice.

The Ontario Energy Board is also looking at putting pilot projects in there to offer different pricing solutions. We get that these types of fixes would actually benefit many of those families, like seniors who are living in a bungalow, for example, in Sudbury, in my riding, on a fixed income. We know that there should be some choice between that and the single condo dweller who happens to live in downtown Toronto.

We've actually tasked this, and the IESO and the OEB have been hard at this for months. We're going to continue to find ways to help all families right across the province.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Final supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Here's a news flash for the energy minister, Speaker: Pilot projects do not create systemic change in our electricity system.

Lower hydro bills start with more public control of the electricity system. The Premier has been in government for almost 14 years. She has been Premier for over four. All she has done during that time is make the hydro crisis worse for people with her wrong-headed sell-off of Hydro One. She has ignored regular people on Main Street in favour of well-connected insiders on Bay Street.

Why doesn't this Premier understand that when Ontarians pay their hydro bills, they expect to be paying for electricity—for electricity—not for someone else's profits, and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, this House well knows that the sale of Hydro One has absolutely nothing to do with rates within the province. There's absolutely nothing to do with that.

What they should know is that time of use is something that is actually saving all ratepayers in this province money. However, what we need to do is ensure that we find ways to work with our system operator and work with the OEB to ensure that we can create the system to keep our conservation efforts up, because conservation is the cheapest form of electricity. We, on this side of the House, recognize that. That's why we brought forward the plan to work with our IESO and the OEB to look at those time-of-use options.

But we also know that families need help right now. That's why we brought forward the 8% rebate.

## ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Todd Smith:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

On Friday, the Minister of Energy said that hindsight was 20/20. According to the Auditor General, experts at the OPA told the government back in 2009, prior to the Green Energy Act coming into effect, “to use a competitive procurement for large renewable energy projects.” But the ministry ignored that advice. They decided to move ahead with the Green Energy Act that we know is a disaster today.

Speaker, which is it?

**Mr. James J. Bradley:** The Tories love coal.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Chief government whip.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** Did those experts mislead the auditor, or did the minister not want to admit that the government ignored the experts so he could shirk responsibility for the skyrocketing hydro rates in Ontario?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** Investing and eliminating coal and building transmission were the absolute right things to do. Investing in renewable energy, investing in green energy was absolutely the right thing to do. Because of our foresight, because of this government’s foresight, we now have a clean and reliable system, one that we can depend on, not something that is in tatters, like when they were in power.

I recognize that we were not perfect every step of the way. The what was correct, which was green energy and renewable power, but we did make some mistakes on the how. Fixed contracts and being technically specific in terms of those methods actually did inhibit competitive tension. But we’re making sure that we’ve brought forward fixes to this. We’re now seeing competitive tension, we’re lowering rates, and we’re also working on other solutions.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** The minister watched as energy prices, electricity prices, in this province skyrocketed out of control. We’ve seen school boards and hospitals with increases to their electricity bills of 35% in one year. Just two weeks ago, the leader of the official opposition and I went to Sault Ste. Marie, to the F.J. Davey Home for the aged, where the price in one year at that seniors’ long-term-care home went up 39%. It’s all on the backs of this Liberal government, and they ignored the advice of the energy experts to go down this hole.

Every time a member of the government takes a question on their electricity crisis, they say that they only had two options: Either they could do nothing, or they could do the most expensive thing possible. Why does the government think that doing their job right in the first place wasn’t an option in the case of electricity in Ontario?

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** There was only one option, which was to rebuild a system that they left in tatters and which was blacking out on a constant basis. Making sure that businesses actually keep the lights on was our

option. Making sure that hospitals were able to do the surgeries they needed was our option. When you de-invest in the system and run Niagara Falls dry—that’s what they did. With the amount of generation they never—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We’ll continue to find ways to help families right across the province. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? When it comes to renewable energy, we will make sure—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Glenn, where do you want to put those windmills?

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. Just when I thought I had control. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington will come to order.

Finish, please.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We’ll continue to find ways to have competitive tension, when we’re looking at lowering rates for all families, when it comes to renewables. The cost of solar and wind is the lowest it’s ever been in this province, and provinces and states are looking to us for the leadership we’ve provided on building a clean, reliable system.

## ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Premier. New Democrats know that privatization of hydro by the Liberals has hurt Ontario families and businesses, but we haven’t forgotten, and neither have Ontarians, that it was the Conservative privatization of Ontario Hydro that helped get us into this mess in the first place. It’s time to stop that the damage that the Liberals and Conservatives have done to our hydro system and take immediate steps to regain control over hydro costs.

Can the Premier tell us, after 14 years in government, when will she finally take action to deal with the hydro crisis that her Liberal government has helped create?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** We’ve been taking action since 2003, rebuilding the system. We’ve made sure that we’ve invested in renewable energy. We’ve invested in making sure that we have a reliable system, a clean system, one that I know the Minister of Health is very proud of as well. We have a system that is seeing our air pollution deaths being reduced by 23% and air pollution hospitalizations being reduced by 41%.

We all know that this investment in building our system—in eliminating coal, in making sure our system is clean and green—came with a cost, and with that, we’ve worked hard. We are continuing to work hard on finding further reductions for families: 8% off their bills come January 1; 12% plus that 8% for those in the Hydro One R2 areas. And we’ll continue to find ways to help.

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**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** The Premier has never taken the hydro crisis seriously until it became a political crisis for

her party. As for the Conservatives, they're offering no real solutions. After 17 years as a Conservative politician, people have no idea where Mr. Brown stands or what he's proposing to do.

The NDP knows that people have to be at the centre of hydro policy, and the time for action is now. If the Premier thinks so too, will she immediately halt the further sell-off of Hydro One and come up with a real strategy to address the hydro crisis?

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** Again, there is no cost increase related to the sale of Hydro One; we all know that within this House. The Ontario Energy Board is the agency that is quasi-judicial and that actually sets the rates.

But when it comes to the Premier and this government actually taking it to the next level and finding ways of reducing costs for people right across the province, we saved \$3.7 billion by renegotiating the Samsung agreement. We saved \$1.9 billion by reducing the FIT prices. We've created the competitive LRP process, which saved \$1.5 billion. We suspended the LRP II process, which saved \$3.8 billion. We also got new dispatching rules for wind, which saves \$200 million. We're going to continue to find ways to help families right across this province.

## ONTARIO150

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. As we all know, 2017 is an exciting and festive year where Ontarians will have the opportunity to come together and celebrate the 150th anniversary of our incredible province. This year, our government's goal is to celebrate the culture of inclusion, innovation and opportunity that uniquely defines Ontario through the Ontario150 program.

Last week, the minister was in Mississauga to announce support through the partnership program for MonstrARTy Creative Community to provide South Asian youth artists with vital business skills, media training and a support network of seasoned artists and music industry experts.

My question to the minister is: Can she tell the members of this House about the three Ontario150 grant programs that will promote community—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you.

**Hon. Eleanor McMahon:** Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for the question. I'm just thrilled about the energy we saw in Mississauga at last week's announcement—absolutely incredible. The room was just on fire. It was wonderful.

We're delivering 87 projects through the Ontario150 partnership program to support communities and organizations across Ontario, and we're also inspiring our youth, which I know every member of this House cares about. The province-wide community grant programs that we're rolling out include a \$25-million Community Capital Program that supports the repair, renovation or retrofitting of existing infrastructure to better address the diverse needs of Ontario communities; a \$5-million Part-

nership Program that empowers our youth; and a \$7-million dollar Community Celebration Program which will ensure the celebratory environment of Ontario150 reaching Ontarians in every community across Ontario.

Altogether, we are funding over 650 events, initiatives and infrastructure projects across our province to commemorate this historic milestone year. I look forward to the supplementary to provide more information.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** I agree with the minister's comments about the success of the event last week, as this past Friday I was in my community office, and I received several calls from young artists to further inquire about the program.

I look forward to celebrating Ontario150 in my great community of Mississauga–Brampton South. Ontario150 will boost community pride and build a deeper connection to the place we call home. It's a year-long celebration of the qualities and values that define us as Ontarians.

The minister has also announced that there will be additional initiatives in the year ahead. Can the minister please inform my community, as well as the members of this House, about what we can expect in the coming year?

**Hon. Eleanor McMahon:** On January 24 I had the pleasure of watching Ginger Ale and the Monowhales perform a refreshed version of Ontario's unofficial anthem, *A Place to Stand*, at Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto. This important song will serve as a soundtrack to events and festivals across Ontario this year. It stays true to the original *A Place to Stand*, created for Expo 67, with a modern and vibrant energy, making it relevant to a new generation.

In addition, we recently created and presented the Ontario150 television ad to let people know that we're celebrating our province's qualities and values this year. From the feedback we've received from this ad, it is clearly touching Ontarians.

We're also investing in a number of high-profile signature initiatives and projects, such as the Invictus Games; ONTour, a touring Ontario150-themed music showcase; and National Canadian Film Day in April, the largest one-day film festival in history.

Our 150th anniversary is a chance for us all to celebrate, and I know all members in this House will join me in celebrating our communities, our province and our country in this important year.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES

**Mr. Steve Clark:** My question is to the Premier. Regardless of any deals made in the backroom, it's time this government takes a U-turn yet again on its \$14,000 luxury electric car rebate. Will the Premier put the car in reverse and cancel this rebate?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Steven Del Duca:** As I mentioned in the House last week when the same member asked this question, we

know, and I think the members opposite know, that back in 2010, our government initially launched our very first Electric Vehicle Incentive Program. We know that over the last number of years, it was a program that was successful, but a number of months ago, we decided to undertake a modernization of this program to take a look at some of the new technologies that exist out there.

What we're witnessing, literally on a month-by-month basis, is that more auto manufacturers are putting more options into the marketplace, providing more vehicles. We wanted a program that was modernized and could actually take advantage of, for example, vehicles like the Chrysler Pacifica that didn't exist—

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** Built in Windsor.

**Hon. Steven Del Duca:** —built in Windsor—when the program was first created, but now exist today.

We wanted to take advantage of all of the new options that are there for consumers by modernizing the program. I'm happy to provide an additional update in the supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks, Speaker. I'd love to go back to the Premier for an answer.

Even the Toronto Star editorial board is questioning this government on their \$14,000 luxury car rebate. As the Star sees it—and I'll quote their editorial—"The fact is the wealthy should not be turning to government coffers to subsidize their purchases of luxury vehicles"—or as I like to put it, they're robbing Peter to pay for Paul's Tesla.

A former Premier once said, "It's never too late to do the right thing." I'm going to ask the Premier again: Will the government put the brakes on this \$14,000 luxury car rebate?

**Hon. Steven Del Duca:** I was getting at an answer in my first response to the initial question. There are literally more and more products coming out on the market every single month. I'm not sure if the member who is asking the question is aware of the fact that today, there are somewhere in the neighbourhood of two dozen vehicles that are eligible to receive the support from our incentive program, literally right across the spectrum in terms of all the price points that are available, including many options that are available today which our modernized program took into account when we did the update a number of months ago that do provide more options for middle-class families right across the province of Ontario.

I would encourage that member to take a look at the products that are now available across the entire spectrum of all prices, many of which support people in those middle-class families that he purports to want to support. This government and this Premier are supporting those families and will continue to do so.

## HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Premier. Last week, I had a chance to sit down with the chamber

of commerce in Niagara Falls. One of the main issues on the agenda was hydro rates. These small business owners in Niagara Falls are saying they're struggling to pay their bills. In some cases, they're saying these rates are going to drive them out of business. They're jeopardizing jobs in my riding of Niagara Falls.

Premier, what do you say to these business owners who don't know if they can keep their businesses afloat with rates like these—and, at the end of the day, jeopardizing jobs?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** I thank the member for the question. Small businesses, of course, are a very important part of our overall economy, and we recognize the importance that they play. That's why when we brought forward the 8% reduction back in the fall economic statement—small businesses actually qualify for that 8% reduction, which they started getting off of their bills as of January 1.

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One of the things I do know is that we're going to continue to find ways to reduce electricity bills for small and medium-sized businesses right across the province and all ratepayers, but there are also many incentives for small businesses to talk about with their local utility, to talk with them about the saveONenergy program, in which they can actually save significant money off their bills.

We were in Niagara Falls back in the fall talking about one of the local industries there that utilized many of these programs and is saving hundreds of thousands of dollars. I encourage all small businesses to talk to their local utility to make those savings.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is back to the Premier. It's the chamber of commerce that is talking to us and saying that they're going to have to close their businesses. The 8% you talk about was put on by the Liberal Party. It's nice that you're taking it off, but the reality is, you put it on in the first place.

Every day, residents in my riding get up and drive right past Niagara Falls. In case you forgot, Niagara Falls is a landmark that drove public power in Ontario for over a hundred years. In those same hundred years, those hydro prices were affordable in the province of Ontario.

Premier, how can you explain these rates to the residents of Niagara Falls who see Niagara Falls every day and also see hydro bills with some of the highest rates in North America?

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** We shut down coal plants. We rebuilt a system. We made sure that our system was reliable so that when we had the blackout in 2003, places like Niagara Falls would actually still have their lights on. What we've done is, we've made sure we have a clean system, a reliable system, one that people can actually use.

We know we need to do more. We're acting on that. We're going to be coming forward with a new rate mitigation plan in the very near future. But we also have the saveONenergy program that we encourage all of our

small businesses to use. There are many, many programs out there that are helping; for example, Hematite Manufacturing in Brantford. They've saved significantly: \$200,000 every year on their new equipment.

It's great to see that they took advantage of this program. We encourage all small businesses to do so.

### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. There are more than 2,200 municipal leaders from across Ontario in Toronto today for the Ontario Good Roads Association, or OGRA, conference. It's one of the oldest associations in Ontario. This year, we celebrate Ontario150, and OGRA is not too far behind. I believe this is their 123rd year.

OGRA advocates for the transportation and public work interests of municipalities, and they represent cities and towns, big and small—north and south, east and west—across this province. You could say that they paved the way for many municipal-provincial conversations about critical infrastructure.

Last June, members of OGRA assembled in my riding of Kingston and the Islands to meet with city officials and tour city hall and the surrounding area. I was pleased that we were able to host this important meeting in Kingston.

I understand that the minister spoke at the conference this morning. Can the minister elaborate on our government's participation in the OGRA conference?

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** I thank the member for the question. As she mentioned, I did have an opportunity this morning to speak at the OGRA conference, and I spoke to them, while we were there, about the work that our government has been doing to reset the relationship that exists between our government and the municipal sector.

We remember, before coming into government in 2003, that there was a period of acrimony, I would say, in the province. It was a time of forced downloading of costs onto the municipal residential tax base. It was a time of forced amalgamations. We spoke at length in my remarks when I was there, and we'll have an opportunity to speak later in the day about the work that we're doing as a government to reset that relationship with the municipal sector.

We respect them. We've demonstrated that in a variety of ways, especially, I would say, the AMO MOU table. We meet at least every two months, sometimes every month, rolling legislation through them before it gets to the stage where it's been baked, looking for their input. I think they very much value the relationship as it now stands.

In the supplementary, I'll have more to add.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his answer.

The minister and many members here started in politics at the municipal level. I have to give a shout-out to mayor Denis Doyle of Frontenac Islands, who has been a great advocate.

**Interjection:** A good guy.

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** Yes, he is.

We all know the role local governments play in Ontario's communities and our day-to-day lives. They provide many front-line services, like libraries, waste collection and rec centres, and they help provide critical infrastructure, like the roads we drive on, the parks we walk in and the pipes and treatment facilities that bring clean water to our taps.

Our government is making the largest infrastructure investment in schools, hospitals, public transit, roads and bridges in the province's history. We are investing in the people and communities that make Ontario strong. Infrastructure will also be the key theme at this year's OGRA conference.

Would the minister elaborate on how Ontario's infrastructure investments will support municipalities and local communities all across Ontario?

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** I thank the member for the question. Part of what I talked about this morning at the conference with people was how we're resetting the municipal fiscal sustainability relationship. Since 2003, the total supports to municipalities were about \$1.1 billion. Today, under our government, total supports are in the range of \$4 billion. That's an average increase for municipalities across the province of 264%.

As well, we talked about OCIF. They will know that the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund is being increased from \$100 million to \$300 million. Speaker, that's going to be predictable, guaranteed, bankable money that all of our municipalities across the province can count on every year.

I also talked about the gas tax, how we're doubling gas tax—we're starting by the year 2019, and fully phased in by about 2022. For example, for the city of Toronto, currently receiving \$170 million in gas tax, that will double to \$340 million every single year. The city of Toronto has already received \$1.9 billion in gas tax under our government.

### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I have been working with Rose, a mother whose son, Ricardo, has severe developmental disabilities. On Friday, Rose was told she must pick up Ricardo from the hospital or consider him abandoned.

Rose needs her son to be in a group home because he and his family are not safe in their home. With no group home spaces available, Rose is considering surrendering care of her son to get him the residential space he needs. How can this be happening in Ontario in 2017?

**Hon. Helena Jaczek:** Thank you very much to the member opposite for her question. We understand that quite often, situations where families and caregivers are looking after those with developmental disabilities do face a number of challenges. I'd certainly like to hear a

little bit more about this particular situation from the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

What we are doing is transforming the system here in Ontario. We have committed, as we did to the Ombudsman, to ensure that crisis situations do not occur. We are trying to work very, very hard with our developmental services organizations to ensure that, before a situation becomes a crisis, we work with families and with caregivers to provide the very best solution.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** While you're transforming the system, you're giving away \$14,000 to people who purchase a Tesla. Individuals and families are having to abandon their children.

In October, media reports said that a young adult was abandoned in Oakville. In the region of Peel, I know of nine abandonments and seven threatened abandonments of children and adults with developmental disabilities in the last two years alone.

Abandonment is the last option for families who have been looking for help from your government. It's your government that is abandoning these families.

After the select committee report in 2014, after the Ombudsman's report last year, why is this still happening?

**Hon. Helena Jaczek:** Well, in fact, our government does spend some \$2 billion on developmental services here in Ontario. I certainly don't remember hearing from either of the two opposition parties in their platforms in the last election about any increase in services for this very vulnerable population—whereas we have made an absolutely unprecedented investment since 2014: \$810 million over three years.

We are making really meaningful progress. We have eliminated the 2014 Passport wait-list one year ahead of schedule. We've provided direct funding for an additional 13,000 adults with developmental disabilities. This has brought the total number of individuals served by Passport to approximately 24,000.

This is a program that our government introduced in 2005. It's providing real help for families. We, of course, will continue to work to ensure everyone is taken care of.

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## HYDRO RATES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la première ministre. Premier, my constituent—her initials are A.L.—is very concerned about her hydro bill. She and her husband are retired seniors on pensions. They were paying \$140 a month for hydro on equal billing. Last spring, in order to save more energy, they spent over \$400 and switched all of their lights to LEDs. But instead of seeing their hydro bill go down, their bill actually went up to \$200 a month on equal billing.

Premier, how is that these seniors, who have worked so hard to use less energy, are now paying more for their hydro bill?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** I thank the member for the question. It is important to recognize that we are working hard right now to ensure that those individuals like the honourable member has mentioned are finding ways to see their bills reduced.

We are encouraging conservation, because conservation saves the entire system. When we have people saving and conserving energy, we don't need to build new generation. When we don't have to build new generation we can actually have cost savings for everyone. That's something we encourage.

When it comes to individual cases and reasons for individual bills, I'm more than happy to work with the honourable member to find out ways that we can continue to help this family. There are many programs that are in place that actually help seniors. The Ontario Electricity Support Program is one of those programs in which seniors can see their bills reduced significantly.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Speaker, I can guarantee you that if there was a program out there to help them, we would have helped them. We do this inside and out every single day in my office.

These seniors do their laundry at night. They changed all of their lights to LEDs. For all of their efforts, their hydro bill has gone up. They are on a fixed income and are finding it harder and harder to get by. They are frustrated. They are angry. They have no confidence that the present government will ever make their lives better.

The Premier said that the sell-off of Hydro One would not increase hydro costs, but this is exactly what's happening to each and every one of us in Nickel Belt. When, Premier, will you end the higher cost of rural delivery and give Mrs. A.L. and her husband some relief?

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** As of January 1, those customers with Hydro One on R2 have seen their bills dropped by \$60; we actually enhanced that by \$45 to bring it up to \$60.

But we recognize that there's more to do, especially for those folks who are in northern or rural parts of our province. We're actively working right now to find ways to ensure that we can address that issue, because we do want to make sure that electricity bills right across the province—specifically, distribution—are more equitable for where those people choose to live.

At the end of this we're going to continue to invest in a system that is clean, that is reliable, and one that is benefiting the families like the one the honourable member is mentioning. We'll make sure that we can continue to have this clean, green system and find ways to help.

## EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last year, we passed a very important piece of legislation that helps Ontarians who work in the service industry—in restaurants, nail salons, hair salons, and many other jobs such as that. Through my private member's bill, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, we

made sure that the money that these workers earned fair and square was given to them, and not skimmed off by the owners of those establishments. My constituents and people across the province work very hard for their money, and we're happy this legislation passed unanimously in this House.

I have seen some advertisements of late for the legislation on subways and buses across the province. I know that many people in my riding of Beaches–East York have seen these advertisements as well. Can the minister explain to this House what else the Ministry of Labour is doing to promote this legislation and ensure that employers and employees know their role in this?

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for all the hard work that he put into this private member's bill, because it is paying off.

He talked about the ad campaign. The ad campaign that the member spoke about for tips legislation is a great example of how we're making sure, by any means possible, that people in this province who work understand the rights they have. Through these ads, employees have the information they need to ask questions if they feel like their employers aren't playing by the rules. But we need to work with the employers as well, so we give them the information they need. On our website, we've got information available in a number of languages. We've got an interactive video. We've got a question-and-answer section.

Speaker, this may surprise people, but Stats Canada tells us that there are 65,300 people who rely on food and beverage services for their employment and who receive tips and gratuities. This is impacting a number of people.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** I want to thank the minister for his answer, his incredibly hard work and his support in getting this important piece of legislation through the House.

People come through my office weekly. They're sharing stories of how they work multiple jobs, they have problems getting paid at times by their employer or they're just not being notified in advance when they're going to be scheduled for their work shifts. These are problems all Ontarians face, and not just those in my riding.

These are some of the most vulnerable people in our society. All they want is to be treated fairly and to feel like the law is there to protect them. I know our government has taken steps toward helping these people. This is something of which I'm incredibly proud. But that doesn't change the fact that people are still feeling that they aren't being treated fairly across all industrial and commercial sectors.

Will the minister please share with this House what our government is doing for these vulnerable workers in our society?

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** My thanks, again, to the member for that very important question. I appreciate all the concerns that he has just shared with us. I know they're not just felt in his riding; these are concerns that are reflected right around the province.

Our focus through the Changing Workplaces Review has been to make sure we can help protect vulnerable workers in this province, but all the while creating a level playing field for the vast majority of employers in this province that play by the rules. We should be proud that so many people choose to live, to invest and to work in this great province. But we want to make sure, as the nature of that work changes, that the laws are up to date and that they reflect the protection and that they reflect the preparation businesses need to ensure they're playing by the rules.

In the coming weeks, I expect to have the final report on my desk from the special advisers. I look forward to introducing it in the House.

## WASTE DIVERSION

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** My question is for the Premier. On February 17, 2016, more than a year ago, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change suggested in this House that the Ontario Tire Stewardship program would be eliminated within a year. A year has now come and gone. But, last week, in direct contradiction of that statement, he said it would take until December 31, 2018, the end of next year, to wind up Ontario Tire Stewardship.

How can the people of Ontario trust this latest timeline? Will the minister commit today to winding up Ontario Tire Stewardship immediately? Where is the money going?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** We're actually doing exactly what we said, on the timetable we said we would do it on.

The announcement, the letter and direction went out to Ontario Tire Stewardship to wrap up their operations. There are issues and outstanding investigations, which the member is, I know, aware of, that also have to proceed separately and apart from that, and we're winding up the other ones.

Mr. Speaker, a little humility from the member opposite—given that this system that we're cleaning up was the creation of him and his party when he was in government. This was yet another Tory mess that Liberals are cleaning up.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary, the member from Huron–Bruce.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** How can we trust this minister to get anything right?

OTS board members were enjoying stays at the Château Laurier, Muskoka boat cruises and having extravagant dinners, spending up to \$600 just on wine. On top of that, under this minister's nose, half a million dollars was allegedly stolen.

A constituent of mine, Matt, from Townsend Tires near Walton, recently called me to express his concern about the huge burden of red tape that OTS is putting on his company. He wonders why he should even bother, because he just doesn't trust OTS.

The Premier knows full well that her minister, under the authority of Bill 151, can wind up this cartel immediately. Will the Premier please tell her minister to do the honourable thing and take control of another one of her government's wasteful, ineffective agencies?

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**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, there's something passing strange when it was this Premier who ordered, two years ago, this minister to start to wrap up those changes. We passed Bill 151, which was the legislation that got rid of all of this. It was the third attempt by this government to pass a bill to do it. The opposition parties blocked, in a minority government, the last two attempts, Bill 93. You blocked it.

You also never asked a question while we were cleaning this up. You never asked a question until after we brought forward legislation to wind these up. You weren't even doing your job, and these were your creations. You thought the private sector could run it all on its own. You created these agencies with the problem—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. New question.

### HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. This morning you have heard the voices of Ontarians from across the province and the negative impact that Ontario hydro costs are having on them.

A few weeks ago, while knocking on doors in Kitchener-Waterloo, I met Liz and Kenneth Costello, who told me that they cannot get relief from their rising hydro bills. Not long ago, Kenneth was diagnosed with a chronic lung disease. His wife, Liz, quit her job to become his primary caregiver. Kenneth now has to be on oxygen machines 24 hours a day. It is not optional. Their hydro bills have more than doubled since Ken got sick. In January 2014, their bill was \$289. In January 2017, their bill was \$623. They do not qualify for any of your government's hydro relief programs. They are on one pension. They have no other options.

Premier, what is your plan to help Liz and Kenneth Costello?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** I'd like to thank the honourable member for bringing up that family's situation, because it is one of the situations that we are acting on right now.

I do recognize that the honourable member talked about the OESP, the Ontario Electricity Support Program, and that they don't qualify for that program. We are looking at that program and seeing ways that we can enhance it.

One of the other things that they will get right now is that 8% rebate. That's one of the things I know that they'll get right now, but we are working actively right now to try to find other ways to bring forward rate mitigation to help not only that family—because there are other families right across this province who need help.

We recognize that, and we're going to make sure that we act on that.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'm not sure that the Minister of Energy fully understands the gravity of the situation. Their hydro bill was \$289 in 2014. Today, it is \$623. That is a cost that cannot be absorbed by an elderly couple who are living on one income—a pension income, a fixed income.

As I pointed out, 24-hours-a-day oxygen is not optional for them to use your peak times. What this family should be focused on is keeping Ken healthy and focusing on his health. Instead, their primary concern, the number one point of stress in their lives, is their hydro bill.

Premier, I ask you again today: Do you have a plan that can help Liz and Kenneth cope with the skyrocketing hydro costs in the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** In 2003, that family wouldn't have been able to use their oxygen, because the power would have been out on a regular basis. We've made sure that we have invested in a system that will ensure that there is power there. We will make sure that we will continue to find ways to actually reduce rates. We are working on that. We'll make sure that we can actually have rate mitigation in the very near future.

### ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Leeds-Grenville on a point of order.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thanks, Speaker. Point of order. Over four months ago, I filed order paper question 132. It was filed on October 24. The answer was due on December 8, so now the answer is over two and a half months late. It's a very important issue in my riding. I asked the Minister of Health what action his ministry is giving to alleviate the rising costs of mandatory water testing for non-profits, including community halls, Legions and churches. I'd like him to give me an answer.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. The minister would know standing order 99, to file an answer within 24 sitting days, and I would seek the minister's response in how he's going to alleviate this over-time answer to a question. Minister?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I will address it, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you.

### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs on a point of order.

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** I just wanted to correct my record. Earlier I think I mentioned that by 2019, we would be doubling the provincial gas tax to municipalities, Speaker. Of course, I meant to say we would be doubling the provincial gas tax rebate to municipalities by 2019.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** All members are permitted to correct their own record, and that is a point of order.

## ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Point of order, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Thank you, Speaker. I also have a question on the order paper, number 124, to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services on the order of legal names on official documents. It's over the period, and I'm wondering when I can get an answer.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Minister of Government Services, you have an opportunity to respond.

**Hon. Tracy MacCharles:** I'm not aware of any overdue papers, but I'll be happy to investigate that and report back.

## ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Again, point of order, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Mr. Speaker, I also have an inquiry of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that was submitted October 24 and is now over two months—many months late, actually. It's about the funding formula for mid-sized hospitals and how that's broadly disadvantaged my mid-sized hospitals—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Minister of Health: standing order 99.

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I appreciate the reminder. It will be addressed.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. There being no further points of order and no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

## PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's a pleasure to rise in the assembly today to talk about the opioid crisis that has hit Ottawa and, specifically, the community of Kanata. Over the weekend, I met with community leader Sean O'Leary, whose own daughter is struggling with addiction. I also met with Kevin Neill, whose daughter, as well, is struggling with an opioid addiction. Yesterday, they brought together a dozen of parents, one of whom lost their child to a fentanyl overdose in October and three teenagers who are addicted to these horrible, potentially fatal drugs.

One of the girls impacted me so much when she told me that she was just 10 years old when she started doing drugs and that she became addicted to fake or counterfeit Percocets laced with fentanyl.

Speaker, more needs to be done. There is no question about it. That's why I reached out today to the Premier of Ontario, asking her to put forward a taskforce of a

number of different ministries, including health, education, children and youth, corrections and community service and the colleges, university and training organization because I think it's time that we started talking about what can be done very quickly and what can be done in the longer term to save these kids.

This is a deadly, deadly pill that is out there. It's something we've never seen in this province before with respect to the chemicals that are in it, and I think more needs to be done.

## GENDER IDENTITY

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I'm sure that most folk in the House are aware of President Trump's executive order that rescinded trans rights to students across the United States. This in itself will result in the deaths of trans students—make no mistake.

We should also be aware of Bill C-16, which extends gender identity and gender expression rights to trans folk across Canada for federal institutions and federal employment languages as we speak in the Senate.

I'm particularly proud that, five years ago, this House passed gender identity and gender expression human rights into the Ontario Human Rights Code, called Toby's Act. I wanted to set the record straight because there's a great deal of confusion in the trans community about whether they're covered or not. You are covered in employment, in health care, in housing, in education. You are covered in Ontario.

Remember, it wasn't about water fountains, and it's not now about washrooms. Human rights are human rights, and Ontario trans folks, thanks to everyone in this House, have those rights.

## ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** By unanimously supporting a private member's bill affirming that Ontario stands against prejudice and for the best of every community, this Legislature showed the province, the country and the rest of the world that Ontario can rise above the partisan rancour seen elsewhere when discussing who does and who should live amongst us.

Ontario drew a line against dark nativist anger. The city of Mississauga passed a similar motion in city council last week. Canada's Parliament will likely also pass such a motion as well.

At the Solel Congregation last weekend, our only synagogue in Mississauga, new Rabbi Audrey Pollack, herself an immigrant from Illinois, hosted members of Mississauga's Jewish community and representatives of every major religion practised in Mississauga, particularly our Muslim community. Along with our mayor and council members, the congregation affirmed that Ontario is a place for everyone to feel safe and secure and to build a life, a family, a home and a career.

Our Muslim community has donated more than \$250,000 to build Credit Valley Hospital. Its annual walkathon will raise more funds to improve health care in

Mississauga. This is how Ontarians come together to affirm the dignity of those who call our province home and lay the path to a prosperous and a harmonious future.

### GRIMSBY ROTARY @ NOON

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** It is a great honour to be able to stand today and represent the fine citizens of Niagara West–Glanbrook and my constituents there, particularly the community of Grimsby.

I rise today to speak about Grimsby Rotary @ Noon, which is an excellent organization that does great work in my community. On the 11th of February, earlier this month, I had the opportunity to attend the mayor of Grimsby's gala, where they hosted a fundraiser in support of Habitat for Humanity and were able to come up with funds for a third Habitat for Humanity build in Grimsby.

The Rotary @ Noon club is behind many local initiatives in the Grimsby community: literacy programs, fundraising dances, breakfast clubs in local schools, the mayor's gala and Grimsby's Habitat for Humanity, and I'm proud to be able to stand and congratulate them for the great work they do.

### DRINKING AND DRIVING

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Enough is enough—drunk driving. Mr. Speaker, it's with a heavy heart that I tell my colleagues in this House that a young woman from my riding was killed Friday night when she was hit by a drunk driver. She was only in her early twenties. Her friends and co-workers describe her as a thoughtful and caring person who always helped others. In fact, just recently, she had gone away with her church to help those less fortunate in Central America.

This bright young girl was out on a Friday night, like so many young people, when her life was taken from her by someone who decided to drink and get behind the wheel. When will this come to an end? What do we have to do to finally see the end of drunk driving in the province of Ontario?

The other day, a story broke in Niagara Falls of a man who had been convicted 11 times for drunk driving. No one in the province of Ontario should be driving after being convicted of drunk driving 11 times.

I can talk about my family real quick: My wife was hit by a drunk driver while coming home from school as a vice-principal. I talked to her this morning. She can't take long walks. She can't dance for any length of time. She was a good athlete; she used to play golf, volleyball and squash. It takes its toll on families—my daughter, Jacqueline, and Rita's parents, who saw their daughter go through that and be in a hospital for three months.

The conclusion: We have to work together and end this, whether it's to educate people or ensuring the punishment fits the crime—whatever it takes. We cannot lose one more daughter or mother or aunt or father or son or anyone to drunk driving. Please drive sober, and thank you very much.

### PROGRAMMES ET SERVICES AUX AUTOCHTONES

#### ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** Je me lève aujourd'hui pour saluer le travail extraordinaire d'organisations dans mon comté qui bénéficie aux populations autochtones. Cinq pour cent de la population d'Ottawa–Vanier est Inuit, Métis ou issue des Premières Nations. Nous pouvons compter sur des organisations très dynamiques qui offrent une multitude de programmes et de services pour répondre à leurs besoins et à leurs cultures.

The Wabano Centre, Minwaashin Lodge, the Métis Nation of Ontario, the Inuit children's centre and Tungasuvvingat family services, to name a few, are dedicated to providing services and programs that are tailored to indigenous people, whether it is in health care, in housing, legal services or training. These organizations engage in a multitude of initiatives to promote community building through education and advocacy. They take care of the needs of the very young to the seniors. They take into consideration the deep trauma that has been experienced by people who have suffered the long-lasting effects of residential schools.

I want to salute today the way in which this holistic approach grounded in indigenous values is used to help with the healing and reconciliation aspect in my riding. I want to salute their work today and offer them all my support.

### FIRST RESPONDERS

**Mr. Monte McNaughton:** We are very blessed in Ontario to have brave and capable first responders across our province who go to work each day not knowing what challenges or circumstances they may face. We can't possibly thank them enough for their service and sacrifice.

Today I would like recognize two Strathroy–Caradoc police officers who acted quickly and saved the life of a local man. On December 15, 2016, a call came in that a man had been found unresponsive. Police and ambulance were dispatched. Constable Paul Westendorp was the first to arrive on scene. He administered CPR and used a defibrillator. Constable Pat Wuytenburg arrived shortly after and assisted with CPR.

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Because of this intervention, Mr. Edward Hodgetts was revived and taken to the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital. The actions taken by these two officers were responsible for saving Mr. Hodgetts' life. Interviewed by the local paper, Constable Westendorp was very humble, saying that the incident reminded him why he got into policing and that it was a great feeling to be part of the chain of care.

I want to thank these officers for their service to our community. Their actions on December 15 are a fine reminder of the example of dedicated service of first responders across the province.

## GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FAIR

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** Today I rise to say thank you to a group of people and organizations that are making a difference in my community in Etobicoke Centre every single day. Every day as MPPs, we hear from constituents who need our help. Sometimes our staff can assist them, but very often we actually connect them with government agencies or community agencies that can offer the support that our constituents need.

Community agencies are often run and funded by volunteers. They provide assistance daily to our constituents, including my own. They are fundamental to the quality of life of all our ridings and to my riding of Etobicoke Centre. Although these organizations offer a lot of useful services, many constituents are actually often unaware of them and, therefore, can't always access the help they need when they need it. We can all think of instances when constituents in our respective communities have reached out to our constituency office to ask us for help and assistance in finding local organizations or elements of the government that can actually serve their specific needs and solve their problems.

That is why, a couple of weeks ago, I, alongside my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Peter Milczyn, organized the annual government and community services fair at Cloverdale Mall in Etobicoke and, I am proud to say, we were joined by Laura Albanese, our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The fair created a space for 113 exhibitors, consisting of community service organizations and government agencies. We managed to attract over 3,000 people. The fair allowed my constituents to learn more about these wonderful organizations and what they do.

I rise today to thank the 113 exhibitors not only for participating in the fair but for dedicating themselves to serving my constituents, for making our community a better place to live and for making a difference in Etobicoke Centre every single day.

## WINTER SLEDDOG WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I rise in the House today to recognize world champions in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka. Bracebridge's own Laurel Turansky, a retired teacher from Port Sydney, and her team of Siberian huskies won the six-dog northern breed category of the Winter Sleddog World Championship in Haliburton last month. Laurel and her team beat out competitors from around the globe in the eight-mile race. She overcame adversity in many ways to win the title.

Twelve years ago, Laurel qualified for the world cup but she was unable to compete when she received a breast cancer diagnosis. This year, as a cancer survivor, Laurel competed without taking medication for the arthritis in her back in order to avoid testing positive in the random drug testing.

Another challenge in the lead-up to the competition was training in the freezing rain that affected Muskoka trails for much of January. Despite the slippery conditions, training in Algonquin Park gave her team an edge as the hills mimic much of the Haliburton terrain. I have no doubt that Laurel's strategic training plan helped propel her team to their first-place finish.

I would like to congratulate Laurel and her dogs on their impressive achievement and also for her great tenacity and strength. Congratulations, Laurel.

## MEMBER FOR YORK CENTRE

**Hon. Laura Albanese:** I seek unanimous consent that the member for York Centre be allowed to speak and vote from his place while seated.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is seeking unanimous consent for the member from York Centre to remain seated during his activities here in the House. Do we agree? Agreed.

## PETITIONS

### HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Energy Board recently announced another increase to hydro rates, effective May 1, 2016;

“Whereas hydro costs impact everyone across Ontario, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes who can't afford to pay more as well as businesses who say electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas a recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion by 2032 if nothing changes;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the global adjustment, and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

“Whereas the sell-off of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and is expected to lead to even higher hydro rates;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government stop the sell-off of Hydro One, and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills for all Ontarians.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Sebastian to take to the table.

### PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I have a petition named "Ontario Is Not for Sale."

"Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

"Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of good Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

"Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and....

"Whereas Ontario is stronger when there is shared prosperity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Stop the selling-off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Benjamin to bring to the Clerk.

### ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

"To Address Recurring Delays and Unspecified Time Frames for Elevator Repair and Service.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

"Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

"Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for all residents of high-rise buildings who experience constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and 'out of service' notices for unspecified amounts of time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Urge the Ontario government to require repairs to elevators be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge this government to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity-Spadina and across Ontario."

I support the petition and I give my petition to Nicholaus.

### HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I have a petition with regard to electricity rates. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current ... government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

Mr. Speaker, I support and sign this petition and give it to Luca.

### SHINGLES VACCINE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have this petition that was signed by hundreds of people in my riding, including Madame Monique Paquette from Hanmer, in Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario announced that starting September 15, 2016, the shingles vaccine would be available" to seniors aged 65 to 70 free of charge;

"Whereas seniors over the age of 70 years will still be required to pay for the vaccine if they choose;

"Whereas the government of Ontario claims that studies show that the vaccine is highly effective when seniors are vaccinated between the ages of 65 and 70 and will not cover the vaccine for all Ontario seniors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“This is unfair to seniors over the age of 70 and we urge the government to expand the coverage so that all Ontario seniors are eligible for the free shingles vaccine.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask page Elizabeth-Anne to bring it to the Clerk.

#### HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas home inspections are an integral part of the real estate transaction; and

“Whereas there are no current rules and education system to qualify who is and who is not a home inspector; and

“Whereas the public interest is best served by protecting consumers against receiving a bad home inspection;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Ensure the speedy passage of Bill 59, Putting Consumers First Act, 2016, and mandate the government of Ontario to bring in a strong qualifications regime for home inspectors.”

I agree with this petition and I give it to page Konstantina.

#### HEPATITIS C TREATMENT

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** “Petition to Support Expanding Access to Life-Saving Treatment for Hepatitis C.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently there are approximately 110,000 Ontarians living with hepatitis C and nearly half of individuals with hepatitis C are unaware they have this disease; and

“Whereas new treatments have shown a 95% effectiveness rate in curing individuals with hepatitis C; and

“Whereas many individuals cannot access these highly effective treatments until they meet restrictive clinical criteria that demand an individual’s liver be halfway to cirrhosis; and

“Whereas without access to these new treatments an individual with hepatitis C can cost the health care system up to \$330,000 in health costs; and

“Whereas if adopted, the Greater Access to Hepatitis C Treatment Act, 2016, would allow every individual in Ontario with hepatitis C to receive treatment upon the recommendation from their physician, no matter what stage their disease is in;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support Bill 5, the Greater Access to Hepatitis C Treatment Act, to ensure an individual will no longer have to wait and let their liver further deteriorate before receiving life-saving treatment.”

Because this is my private member’s bill, I support this petition, affix my name to it, and give it to page Anellah.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I have a petition named as follows: “Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to give it to page Rowan to bring it to the Clerk.

#### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas payday loans are the most expensive source of credit in Canada and can create the risk of an additional financial burden for the 3% of Ontario households that borrow payday loans; and

“Whereas in Ontario a two-week payday loan carries an annualized interest rate of approximately 547.5%; and

“Whereas these loans are typically marketed to financially vulnerable consumers;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario government to incrementally reduce the cost of borrowing a payday loan, first to \$18 per \$100 advanced in 2017 and then to \$15 per \$100 advanced in 2018.”

I’m going to pass this petition to the page.

## HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's titled, "Energy Poverty."

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office;

"Whereas over half of Ontario residents' power bills are delivery charges, regulatory charges and global adjustment;

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and increase the cost of living in Ontario;

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity in Ontario, including costs associated with power consumed, delivery charges, administrative charges, global adjustment, tax and any other charges on Ontario residents' energy bills."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

## EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Jennifer Fortin, the executive director of SWEAC, for sending this petition my way. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

"Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is currently reviewing employment and labour laws in the province;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to accomplish the following:

"—ensure that part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time permanent counterparts;

"—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

"—offer fair scheduling with proper advance notice;

"—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

"—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temporary agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

"—end the practice of contract flipping, support wage protection and job security for workers when companies change ownership or contracts expire;

"—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

"—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

"—offer proactive enforcement of the laws through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws;

"—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

"—all workers must be paid at least \$15 an hour, regardless of their age, student status, job or sector of employment."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Luca to give it to the Clerk.

## ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

"Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

"Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for residents of high-rise buildings who experience constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and 'out of service' notices for unspecified amounts of time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Urge the Ontario government to require repairs to elevators be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge this government to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity-Spadina and across Ontario."

I sign this petition and give it to page McGowan.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas life under this Liberal government has become more and more unaffordable; and

"Whereas Ontarians' assets are already taxed multiple times throughout their lives; and

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"Whereas the Liberal government has raised taxes through new eco fees, a health tax, and increased income taxes multiple times;

"Whereas the estate administration tax in Ontario is the highest of any province in Canada;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government repeal the estate administration tax immediately."

I sign my name to it and give it to page Sebastian to take to the table.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I thank all members for their petitions. Petition time is over.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE  
BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2017LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT  
LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION  
COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS  
SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2014 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** As the official opposition critic for education and post-secondary education, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, an important piece of legislation which impacts the collective bargaining process in the province as it pertains to negotiations between the government and those who work in the education sector.

John F. Kennedy, the late president of the United States, a man whom I've admired for quite some time, once said the following concerning education: "The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth." Speaker, this is a quote that is as timeless today as it was in the 1960s and will continue to be relevant so long as history is studied. I would think that all members of this House, and in fact every resident of this province, would agree with President Kennedy's statement. I believe it's every young person's aspiration to become successful as an adult. We have seen, time and time again, that receiving quality education is an effective route to that success.

As members of this House, it's our responsibility to ensure that route is always open to Ontario's youth and that we continue to strive to improve the education system to the benefit of our current and future students. After all, today's students are tomorrow's community leaders. So it is up to us to listen regularly and carefully to students, parents and teachers to learn how we can help to put in place the elements that lead to successful outcomes in the schools across our great province.

In that vein, the benefits of education can be seen everywhere. It has allowed our society to invent an incredible amount of consumer goods that have improved our daily lives and allowed entire sectors to grow out of these new inventions. Take, for example, information technology science. This is a relatively new field in the education sphere and continues to evolve to this day. However, this field began 40 to 50 years ago, when some intrepid inventors wanted to create a device that would address our needs. In doing so, they spawned an entire

industry of personal computers, business information technology and even portable communications, like cellphones.

Each of these developments required a high level of education and the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education. Today, these devices have been integrated into our education system all the way down to the elementary school level, where young children are being taught how to use computers or tablets. This entire industry has had almost a circular effect on education. When new technology is integrated into the classroom, it accelerates and enhances the learning process of students and graduates who want to work in this industry and create more advanced technology that can then be integrated into the classroom.

But, Speaker, education is not limited to the field of computer science, is it? Engineering education has allowed us to construct immense buildings and bridges. Education in science has resulted in advanced medical procedures to save those who are ill, when as recently as 30 or 40 years ago, those same people would have been subjected to unfortunate diagnoses and outcomes. The list goes on and on.

All of these advancements would not have been possible if our society did not value education and the pursuit of knowledge. This is why I and my colleagues take our critic roles in monitoring this government's stewardship of the education system very seriously: because we understand the value that education can bring to our society.

When I was first elected in February 2016, I came to Queen's Park to serve the people of Whitby-Oshawa and work hard, like my colleagues in this House do, every day to make their lives better by holding this government to account. Speaker, I was honoured, shortly after my election, to be asked by the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to serve as critic for advanced education and skills development. Within that context, it's been my great honour to keep this government accountable, to make sure that they remember to keep in mind the best interests of everyone involved in the education sector, whether it be a student taking classes in high school or at university; the parent wanting to ensure that their child is able to attend a college or university and become successful thereafter; the teachers themselves who are directly responsible for facilitating the learning process; or the administrators who ensure that teachers are able to focus on teaching.

As a resident, as a councillor for the town of Whitby and now in my role as the critic for post-secondary education and associate critic for education, I have watched in dismay as the government has continued to bungle the education file. Perhaps this is no more apparent than in my own backyard of Whitby-Oshawa. While I was a regional councillor for the town of Whitby and regional councillor for the region of Durham, I witnessed first-hand this government's ineptitude when in 2015 we saw secondary schools across Durham region shut down—shut down—due to strikes. During that time,

I heard from many parents whose way of life was deeply affected by their sons and daughters being out of school. Speaker, as I'm sure you know, these types of situations take a real toll on families, particularly students who miss critical lessons and days in the classroom in such a formative part of their education and, ultimately, their life.

Now, any labour expert will tell you that the best deal is the one that the parties reach themselves. But during this process, it was becoming increasingly clear that this government had mismanaged that process. This government gave the parties no other option, and the saga eventually led to back-to-work legislation being considered by the House and ultimately a decision by the Ontario Labour Relations Board which ended the strike.

Regardless of the conclusion of that process, it was clear that teachers were becoming increasingly frustrated with the government's approach. Teachers like my daughter, with the Durham Catholic school board, are entrusted to shape and mould the minds of tomorrow. They're called upon to go above and beyond for our children. As the lifeblood of our education system, it is important that we arrive at a process that works both for teachers and the taxpayer.

Speaker, this government's two-tiered bargaining system has clearly been a failure, creating chaos for children and parents and leading to the strike in the region of Durham, which was the longest in 25 years—the longest in 25 years.

Now let's turn to the changing dynamic in the classroom. As time has passed, the education system has evolved to incorporate more students, more classes and a wider variety of subjects that need to be taught to our students. The unfortunate flip side of this is that the problems we must deal with in the system have also changed and become more complex. Thus, so too must our solutions to these problems.

A growing problem that our teachers are facing on a daily basis is deteriorating conditions in their workplace. These deteriorating conditions can take many forms, whether it's violent students, bullying in schools or reduced resources for special-needs students. Everyone in this province is entitled to work in a safe environment.

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**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Sorry. The member for Nickel Belt on a point of order.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I don't think we have a quorum.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'd ask table staff to ascertain if we have a quorum or not.

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** A quorum now being present, we resume and I return to the member for Whitby-Oshawa.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Speaker.

I was about to say that everyone in this province is entitled to work in a safe environment, and this could not be more true for teachers. In an ideal world, each student in every class attends their school excited to learn the topics of the day and has a thirst for knowledge that never goes away. Unfortunately, the reality is that sometimes students struggle with the material and, in rare cases, lash out against their teachers.

In the event that a student does become violent in the classroom, teachers should be appropriately equipped to handle these situations in a way that allows both the teacher and the student to walk away unharmed. Schools should also be equipped to address these situations quickly and safely, with a focus on ensuring that incidents do not reoccur.

A related issue is that of bullying, Speaker. Bullying has become increasingly commonplace in our schools and is completely unacceptable. The acts of bullies in the 21st century have become even more harsh with the dawn of social media. In the past, children were able to escape from the stresses put on them by being bullied at school by returning home to their families at the end of the day. Today, however, bullies are able to directly access other students from anywhere, at any time.

I have no doubt that each of us, either directly or indirectly, knows someone who has been bullied in school or has a child who has been bullied in school. This is why it's more important than ever to equip our teachers with the tools and skills necessary to prevent bullying where possible, recognize when bullying is occurring in their classes and do what they can to stop it as soon as possible.

We know that a student's desire to attend school can plummet if they are bullied, and because of that, it is crucial that we address the problem swiftly, because each student should be able to pursue their route to success through the education system.

Similarly, we need to be able to better recognize the needs of special education students at our schools, and these students have just as much a right to pursue their route to success as every other student in school. More often than not, they simply require more resources and specialized learning plans to do so. We recognize that a significant part of improving the conditions in teachers' workplaces is providing them with the resources necessary to ensure that all of their students can thrive and succeed. Speaker, we would like to see an education system that truly allows for individualized learning plans for these students and an environment that allows teachers to facilitate the learning process without feeling as though there aren't enough hours in a day for each student.

Meanwhile, another substantial area where this government has failed is the state of disrepair of many of our schools. This government has had 14 years to address the state of schools in Ontario. As far back as 2003, when then-Liberal education minister Gerard Kennedy launched the Good Places to Learn initiative, he stated: "Ultimately, a school's condition reflects the state of

commitment of one generation to the advancement of the next.” He confirmed at that time that there was a deficit of over \$5 billion with regard to the state of Ontario schools. But this government’s response to the problem was tepid at best. Minister Kennedy recommended an increase of annual renewal funding and a one-time injection of public funds to persuade Ontarians that they were acting on the infrastructure problems in our schools.

It became clear, in hindsight, that this government’s strategy on the file has been big announcements of Band-Aid solutions or a “move along; nothing to see here” approach. Well, there was something to see, Mr. Speaker.

In a December 2015 report by the Auditor General, she referenced Ontario’s asset base of schools and recommended that \$1.4 billion per year was realistically needed just to keep our schools in good working order. She also went further and noted that the deficit of disrepair in our schools had ballooned from \$5 billion in 2003 to \$14 billion in 2015. This confirmed that not only were our schools in bad shape, but that the problem was not being adequately addressed and was getting worse over time. Ultimately, the Auditor General stated that her recommendation of \$1.4 billion per year to maintain our schools’ infrastructure would keep the ship afloat, as it were, but would not do a great deal to take care of the amount of deferred maintenance that had been allowed to accrue under this government.

Knowing the full scope of the problem, it cannot be said that this government understands how to address the problem adequately. In June of 2016, this government announced an additional \$1.1 billion of public funding for school repairs over the course of two years. However, what that money does not do is take care of the \$15 billion that was allowed to accrue in deferred maintenance.

Speaker, I must give credit where credit is due and commend the Minister of Education on one matter. I’m pleased to see that the Ministry of Education released data on the disrepair figures of all schools in Ontario. What this did was that it increased the transparency on the issue of school conditions and confirmed that the \$15-billion backlog of capital repair not only exists in our publicly funded school system but also impacts every single one of our 72 school boards.

It takes a certain degree of humility to admit when you’ve made a mistake. While I appreciate the minister’s effort to shed light on the problem, it does not excuse the level of inaction—inaction, Speaker—in our school system. But let’s be clear. I’m not here this afternoon to just point out the minister’s mistakes; I’m looking forward to the future and how members of this House can continue to alleviate the state of disrepair in our schools.

We would expect ongoing transparency about disrepair in the Ontario school system and an annual release of facility condition index data as well as an analysis on the overall capital repair backlog so that we, as members of this House, and the residents of Ontario can see what we hope is a stem in the tide of year-over-year increases in that amount and start to see a decrease in the \$15 billion of disrepair instead of an increase.

Furthermore, we’d recommend that debt instruments need to be explored and that those are the only tools available that will sufficiently, and with the speed required, take care of these buildings in which two million children spend their days—Speaker, that’s two million children.

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We would also recommend guidelines for the desired conditions at which schools should be maintained. At a high level, we need to discuss what facility condition index level would be considered appropriate for classes to occur and what facility condition index level would be required for classes to be cancelled for the safety of our students. Speaker, we would also need to discuss what the average facility condition index level should be across all of the schools in Ontario, the obvious answer being that we should strive to improve the conditions of all the schools in our education system. From a low level, we would expect guidelines for the actual learning and working conditions of children and adults who spend their days in Ontario school buildings, and a plan—a plan, Speaker—for how to reach these goals.

We would like to see issues not limited to, but including: What is the acceptable temperature range of classrooms for children to learn in, and teachers to work in; what is the acceptable air quality for these classrooms; and what is an acceptable amount of natural light? There are many, many children learning in classrooms with no windows currently, whether it be in detached classrooms or rooms in schools that have been newly converted into classrooms to accommodate expanding communities and enrolment in those communities’ schools.

This might surprise those of you with no children in the public school system, and actually would surprise many parents also, because we don’t often hear about the problems that happen in schools because our children think that’s normal and are unlikely to speak up about issues that are perceived as such.

Speaker, we would also like to see a proportionate distribution of the capital costs of maintaining school assets amongst the municipalities. The various provincial ministries and the various federal ministries continue to treat these schools as assets rather than the places of learning that they are, yet we continue to burden school boards exclusively with the capital costs of maintaining those buildings.

We would like to see an approach to selling schools that recognizes the importance of local schools as community hubs, and focuses on the needs of students, families and communities rather than on an efficient use of assets at all costs. Schools are often in use outside of classroom hours as places where local sports leagues or other extracurricular activities can organize. A sale of any school has the capacity to affect the local community very deeply, and we would expect equal consideration be given to any decision made as to the sale of a school.

We would also like government to stop promoting the notion that disrepair in schools happened mostly because of an inefficient use of assets by school boards, when in

fact many, many documents—including the ones I have cited—would suggest that there have been gross and chronic underfunding to the school boards. Speaker, this has become a pattern under this government and is not unique—not unique—to the education file. Even if they had used every single school as efficiently as humanly possible with the funding given over the last 20 years, they would not have been able to keep these schools up to a standard to which Ontario children should have access.

Additionally, we would like to recommend a structure where power over education funding and policies and the accountability for actually delivering public education reside in the same place, making passing the buck a non-option. Speaker, increased accountability in our education framework—and by extension, the government at large—is something that we all benefit from. I might add that pointing the finger and blaming others has become quite a sport and more and more common in the education sector under this government when it comes to delivering resources to our school system.

To build on this expectation of increased accountability, we would like to see a structure where accountability for the delivery of public education reflects the reality and experience of real students and teachers, a structure that is not simply a sanitized look at education quality assessment office numbers and statistics, or high school graduation rates.

I've spoken with many students and parents in the riding of Whitby-Oshawa and others throughout the province. When you actually talk to students and parents, you might hear a very different story.

We'd also like a review of the funding formula and the benchmark costs which inform most of the grants in the funding formula. The government has promised this in almost every election and has yet to actually do a complete review and rejig of the funding formula. It's time for the government to finally make good on its promise. It's time for a complete look at how we're funding education in this province and how the power dynamic works. This will allow the government to more appropriately and accurately distribute funds and resources to schools and communities, with a focus on improving the experience of students in schools across Ontario.

In recent months, we have seen several calls to close schools, specifically in rural areas, as a way to improve cost efficiency and deal with enrolment issues. However, I would submit that there are other, more fruitful alternatives, ones that would not disrupt the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of students, families and education workers.

For instance, we would ask the government to encourage school boards to further explore shared service agreements as well as shared facility agreements for coterminous boards. Ontarians already reap considerable benefits from these arrangements. For example, in Brantford, St. Basil Catholic Elementary School and Walter Gretzky Elementary School each have a wing in a

90,000-square-foot shared facility. The arrangement has already produced significant cost savings.

This approach is further supported by a feasibility analysis of 11 school boards carried out by Deloitte in 2012, which found that shared services in areas such as energy and transportation could produce ongoing annual savings of \$3 million to \$8 million per year, representing anywhere from 13% to 28% savings on these boards' annual total expenditures. All this is to say that, ultimately, there are ways to find cost efficiencies within our current system.

Education is a public good. Efficiencies should not come at the expense of quality, but we must also remember that teachers and students in the classroom must always be the focal point of provincial education funding. For example, money for professional development should be allocated for teacher-directed and teacher-led initiatives. Training programs must reflect the experiences of teachers on the ground rather than being dictated from central administration, and funding should be directed as such.

One of the many benefits of specialized teacher-led professional development is that it allows teachers to better understand and engage with particular student populations. Perhaps nowhere is that more evident than with First Nations, Métis and indigenous populations. Although there is much-deserved attention paid to on-reserve schools, it is important to remember that 82% of indigenous students attend a provincially funded school.

To redress the current education and resource gaps that many students face, the government must ensure that schools have additional resources so that students have access to the proper supports required to meet their needs. But the critical component in this is to ensure sustainable, multi-year funding of public education and facilitate effective long-term planning with the earlier release of grants for student needs and flexibility to allow boards to meet local needs. We believe in long-term planning, but it is very difficult for boards to engage in long-term planning in a system where funding allocations are made only months before the start of the new fiscal year and are only for one year.

**1400**

Multi-year planning requires stable multi-year funding and flexibility in order to meet local needs, in addition to providing school boards with a long-term projection of what they can expect with regard to funding allocations well before the start of the new fiscal year. This would allow school boards to plan ahead much more effectively and would reduce the potential of boom-bust funding cycles that can happen in the current short-term model.

Speaker, I feel that in debating Bill 92 in the House today it is necessary to discuss the great work that the Auditor General of Ontario has done on this file in conjunction with a historical look at collective bargaining relations under this government, as it gives an important historical context as to why this bill was drafted in the first place.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education began informal talks with local bargaining units, with the aim that they

incorporate provincially based funding and staffing policies into their specific local agreements. At the time, local collective bargaining was the primary process through which collective agreements were reached. However, the province then introduced a voluntary second tier of central bargaining which would serve to focus on issues that would naturally be suited to a centralized bargaining process; for example, Speaker, salaries and other financial matters, considering that the province controls the funding for education.

While the process was voluntary, the ministry encouraged participation in the central process by offering in advance to cover the participants' costs. By 2008-09, despite a continued lack of legislation on this matter, the Ministry of Education required that the terms of the central bargaining agreements be incorporated into all local collective agreements.

During the 2012 round of negotiations, all the trustees' associations and some teachers' unions withdrew from the central bargaining process. In response, this government enacted the Putting Students First Act, 2012—which could also have been called the “putting teachers last act”—in order to force local school boards and union districts to incorporate into their local agreements the settlements that had been reached centrally.

In short, this did not go well for the government. They were taken to court by the teachers' unions, and the Ontario Superior Court of Justice found that the Putting Students First Act, 2012, was deemed unconstitutional. Two years later, when the government introduced the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014, the ministry had by that time spent a total of \$14.2 million on its own central bargaining activities.

I would add that it was shortly after this period, on November 4, 2015, that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts passed a motion to have the Auditor General's office review the bargaining costs paid to the education sector unions since 2008. Had the standing committee not passed that motion, it's unlikely that the Ministry of Education would have released all the information we now have access to today.

Ultimately, the results of the committee's motion were included in the May 2016 Auditor General's report, where it was found that since the year 2000 the ministry had made payments amounting to \$80.5 million. Speaker, this number is staggering, but not surprising considering this government's history of waste and mismanagement.

Furthermore, it was found that while some portions of the payments to the unions were allocated to provide teachers with some professional development, a full \$22 million was provided with no strings attached, and that the ministry has little information as to what these funds were actually used for.

The Auditor General asked if this was “an appropriate use of taxpayer funds, given that union members' dues typically are used to cover bargaining costs.” In addition, the Auditor General stated, “We found very little evidence of governments paying education-sector unions for significant bargaining costs elsewhere in Canada.”

But, Speaker, the lack of financial accountability is not the only critical issue here. When you look at the history of collective bargaining in this province under this government, you can see how long they have left the engine idling on this file. They began talks in 2004 to try to centralize the collective bargaining process. It took them 10 years to successfully introduce the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014, and a further three years to fix it by introducing the bill we're debating today, Bill 92.

This raises some questions, the first of which is, “Why now?” Why didn't this government bring forward the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014, a decade ago, when they began talks with the unions to centralize the process? Furthermore, why weren't the amendments contained in Bill 92 in the original act three years ago?

There can only be two reasonable answers to this question. The first is that the Ministry of Education did not adequately complete the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014, when the minister tabled it in the House. The alternative is that the amendments in this bill are exceptionally time-sensitive.

If it's the latter, then we would ask what the considerations are on why this bill is being brought forward at this time. Is the urgency and importance being driven by the upcoming provincial election? I feel it is important that the minister's answers to these questions are on the record so that we know where this government stands on the bill and whether there are potential ulterior motives at work here.

Speaker, earlier I quoted words from the late American President John F. Kennedy. He once said, “Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” While it's clear that this government lacks the former, we must therefore assume that they are incapable of the latter. Nevertheless, we give this bill the same degree of scrutiny as we give to all bills that pass through this House.

What exactly does Bill 92, an act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, seek to change? Bill 92 proposes several amendments that would change how the collective bargaining process is handled in the province. Some of the changes that the bill makes are good ones, but there are others that we have concerns about.

Perhaps the largest change that Bill 92 would make is that it would force unions to a centralized bargaining table for collective agreements. Currently, the 2014 School Boards Collective Bargaining Act provides that the collective bargaining for collective agreements under the act may include centralized bargaining, but there is no requirement to include a centralized process. Bill 92 changes the collective bargaining process by requiring that centralized bargaining must always occur first, and that every employee in a union and every school board must be represented by a collective bargaining union.

Bill 92 also amends the act by mandating that unions must have over 60 employees to be at the bargaining table, and if there are less than 15 employees, then they must join a union that has a collective bargaining agency to be present at the negotiating table.

We are concerned that this shift will ignore many of the local issues that are specific to the needs of particular regions or teachers. In my view, forcing every employee into a union and collective bargaining into a centralized bargaining process carries the risk of all negotiations being focused on high-level items such as salaries, and likely won't consider issues such as working environments in unique areas.

However, this bill is not without some merit. For example, it allows the Minister of Education to extend the duration of current agreements by a period of two, four or five years. I have spoken with some teachers in my riding, and several feel that the time between negotiations is too short and that negotiations happen too frequently. Many of these teachers want to focus on teaching their students rather than worrying about what is being discussed at the negotiation table.

1410

Giving the Ministry of Education more flexibility in what the structure of collective agreements can look like is something that has value if it is to the benefit of both teachers and the taxpayer.

There is also an amendment in this bill to add an additional five days' notice of any change of a strike or lockout that would result in complete withdrawal of instruction, services or total closure of one or more schools of a board. When a strike or lockout occurs, it often results in a great amount of stress for both parents and children as they try to figure out how to accommodate the children being unable to go to school. While preventing a strike from occurring is obviously the most optimal option, providing parents with additional notice of a strike is something that we welcome.

The bill also requires school boards to provide updates of the progress of local bargaining, which could result in more accountable and transparent negotiation.

The last amendment I would like to mention is the bill requires that trustee associations be added to the sunshine list and that trustees would also be required to report their use of public funds received from the Ministry of Education.

Naturally, we agree with the amendments that increase the level of accountability in government, as the public has the right to know how their tax dollars are being spent.

As I said earlier, we will give this bill the same level of scrutiny as we would any bill and look forward to a continued debate. However, we're not the only ones who have given this bill a great deal of thought and scrutiny. My office recently received a letter signed by the presidents of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association, the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario and the Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques. They had been offered an opportunity to provide input into Bill 92 and raised significant concerns regarding a number of issues that would not be addressed by this bill.

First, each of these associations had noted their commitment to a sequenced bargaining process, which they believe provides greater stability in the sector.

Second, they have become concerned that the amendments in Bill 92 contained no ability to decrease the number of central bargaining tables and in fact could actually increase the number of central tables.

Last, these associations noted that because this government has decided that Bill 92 will not address the issue of sanctions that can occur at both the central and the local level, there is the possibility that the education sector could find itself in a state of perpetual sanction.

Speaker, these associations are well positioned to understand the needs of our education system. I would think that this government would listen carefully to their recommendations and consider each as we debate this bill here.

As one would expect with any bill that has an impact on collective bargaining, there have been several stories in the media recently addressing the issue of collective bargaining. I believe that it's important to have some of what has been said on the record here.

For example, a *Globe and Mail* piece took a look at recently ratified contracts with the Canadian Union of Public Employees and how that agreement included a 4% wage increase over two years. The article states that this is reflective of the agreements that the government has reached with other education unions, including those with the Catholic and the elementary school teachers.

Another recent article, in the *Toronto Star*, claimed that a recently reached collective agreement with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation is the last negotiation process in this round.

The total amounts of this round of bargaining with all education sector unions is expected to cost the province hundreds of millions of dollars over the next two years in additional salaries. The article later states that an increase of 1% to the wages of the province's teachers can generally be expected to cost \$170 million. When coupled with the results of other collective agreements, this means that this round of collective bargaining represents a cost of roughly \$680 million over two years.

Speaker, you may be wondering why I raise these articles and the figures they use in the Legislature. That's because we have a concern about these costs when we consider that the minister has gone on the record saying that any cost associated with collective bargaining would be "net zero." This begs the question: How will the minister be ensuring that collective agreements are net zero? The only question is, where will the cuts come from? They cannot come from the collective bargaining increases to our educators, so this government has to cut elsewhere, and this is what concerns my colleagues.

Today, I've spoken about several ways in which our education system needs improvement and how the system cannot take more of this government's neglect, but I cannot imagine the damage that would be done to our children's education if cuts were made to anti-bullying measures, the school repair funding program or

our special-needs students. Any cuts made to anti-bullying measures would remove what tools exist that allow our educators to prevent and address bullying before it becomes serious and help children who have been bullied if they're unable to prevent it.

Any cuts made to our school repair system would deepen the infrastructure deficit that already exists, resulting in some students not having access to adequate facilities and others being forced to move into other schools because it would be a danger to the students to remain in their original building. We've seen that this government does not understand how to address the problem, and any aid they've offered has been window dressing, at best. I'd also been concerned about the ongoing status of our education infrastructure if the cuts came from here.

However, one area where cuts of any kind would do great damage is in the area of special-needs students. I've already discussed how we need to be able to recognize the needs of special education students in our schools. The resources that special-needs administrators currently receive are not enough to be able to accommodate the needs of these students.

Speaker, what happens to special-needs programs if they're faced with cuts? What happens to these students? How will this government ensure that special-needs students will always have the same opportunity—the same opportunity to receive an education as every other student in this province? These are the most vulnerable individuals in our society. They absolutely should not have their services cut, but cuts in other areas would also be unacceptable. If there was a reduction in support staff and a downloading of work directly to teachers, this would negatively impact the amount of time that teachers are able to spend in the classroom and, by extension, how much time they would spend with each student. This is not conducive to having an environment that promotes learning. Teachers require certain support structures that allow them to focus on their jobs—educating students—thus these support systems are critical for our children's education.

In a similar vein, we've already seen large cuts to resources in classrooms. Many teachers often have to pay for the items themselves that they use in the classroom. What else will teachers be forced to pay for if further cuts are made in this area? Ultimately, we would like to see this government not adopt a slash-and-burn approach just to maintain the idea that the result of collective bargaining will be net zero from a funding perspective.

Any cuts made to the areas I discuss would have unfortunate ramifications for not just the affected students but the teachers and the parents of students as well. This is why I believe it's important that any particular questions that I raise are answered. Students, teachers and parents have a right to know how this government is going to change the education system, particularly if it affects them directly.

In closing, I'd like to reiterate what I've said here today about our concerns with Bill 92, an act to amend

the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. Again, there are some provisions in this bill that we welcome and think would have a positive impact on the lives of those that it would most affect, students and their parents; in particular, that it requires an additional five days' notice if a strike or lockout is going to occur, giving parents more time to plan for their children. The bill also gives the Ministry of Education some flexibility in the length of collective agreements, giving teachers more time to focus on students and less upon what is happening at the negotiation table.

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Of course, we welcome the amendment that increases accountability, such as requiring school boards to provide updates on the progress of local bargaining and including trustee associations on the Ontario sunshine list. Both of these amendments will provide a more open environment for the public to see how their taxpayer dollars are spent.

But, as I said, there are some challenges with the legislation. On the accountability front, we don't believe that this bill goes far enough. It requires that trustee associations be more open and accountable, while at the same time forcing collective bargaining to occur through a centralized process. We're also concerned that the accountability measures contained in the amendments within Bill 92 are just a sideshow to the minister's true objective: forcing collective bargaining into the shadows so that the public cannot see how this government is handling the negotiations. There's simply no way that we can trust that this is actually a priority for this government; otherwise it would have taken a much more concrete stance in 2004 and passed legislation much more quickly.

We were also concerned about the minister's statements concerning the net-zero approach to collective bargaining agreements. Our concern is that this almost certainly means cuts to education. Whether the cuts be from classroom resources, administrative resources, specifically from special needs students or elsewhere, parents and teachers both have a right to know how this government is going to impact the education system to compensate for their generous strategy at the bargaining table.

I've mentioned in this House before that my daughter is an early childhood educator. I know that she and many others in the education sector go to work every day to do what small part they can in shaping the minds of their students and preparing them for the world that awaits them. That's why we will continue to study this bill to determine if it's in the best interests of our students, our teachers and the education future.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** We now go to questions and comments. I would remind the members that the questions and comments are intended to be relating back to the presentation that was just given by the member for Whitby-Oshawa.

Questions and comments?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It was very interesting to listen to, really, 50 minutes of an hour lead on Bill 92, an act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

I do support a lot of what the member had to say. Why is it that the Liberals can't seem to get it right? Why is it that we had, in 2012, the Putting Students First Act, then, in 2014, we changed the bargaining and then, in 2017, we will change the bargaining again? Maybe we could take our time, listen to everybody on both sides of the House that has good ideas and get it right this time, because at the end of the day, when the bargaining rules are not clear, nothing good comes of this, certainly, for the people affected, but mainly for our children in the schools in and around.

I was also interested when he was talking about the school reviews taking place. I have been an MPP for close to 10 years, Speaker. Every single year, I have at least one of the four school boards that cover my area do a school review. I can tell you exactly how it's going to end: All of the little schools in Nickel Belt close, and we put those kids—three and a half and four years old—on buses for hours at a time to bus them into big, urban schools. This is wrong.

The last one to go through this was the rainbow school board. The last time they went at it, they shut down the school in my riding in Long Lake. Now this area has no school; everybody gets bused. Now they are looking at a primary school in Levack and Dowling as well as secondary schools in Lively and Chelmsford. We have to do better than this. I agree with what the member has said.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments related to the presentation by the member for Whitby—Oshawa?

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** I would like to thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa for his presentation. He spoke for an hour, which was quite good—not that I agree with most of what he had to say. Also, I'd like to thank the member from Nickel Belt.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member from Oshawa. I remember back in the early 2000s—2002, prior to 2003—the state of our school system. I remember Mike Harris saying he was going to create a crisis in our school system, and create a crisis they did. It was such a crisis for our young students, our young people, that I had young students coming to me and saying to me that the strike had really jeopardized their chances of getting scholarships because there were no extracurricular activities in the schools. The schools were in total chaos.

So it's surprising to me that I'm hearing a lecture from that side of the House. I didn't really mean to be partisan about this, because I really believe, and my thought was, that what's being said here today would be: What would be in the best interests of our kids? We want to make sure that they get the education they need. We want to make sure that the tools are there. That's the same party that said they would scrap full-day kindergarten. That's also a useful tool for our kids. I travel this province and I hear from parents and I hear from teachers the value of full-day kindergarten.

So this is the last party that anybody should take lectures from in this province when it comes to educa-

tion. In their platform, education wasn't even a factor. And as the member said, there must be an election coming—why they have such concern about education at this point.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I want to congratulate the member from Whitby—Oshawa on a tremendous speech introducing the opposition's debate on this bill, Bill 92. I thank him very much for bringing forward many points, and for the fact that he's brought out some solutions, heading into committee, which I hope the members opposite will take into consideration, considering their track record of not listening to anything the opposition parties—either side—have to say on any bill of this House. It's unfortunate that they're running the government as such.

However, he did make mention of the review ongoing throughout the province at different school boards and the schools—the EPAR system. It's through this government's mismanagement of our finances as a whole that we're seeing a rationing. We see a rationing in the health care system, where many people can't get a bed in long-term care. Many people can't get the surgeries they need.

But now we're seeing a rationing in our school system, where many rural schools—up to 600—will be closed in order to placate this government's wasteful spending. In my riding, we've seen the schools of Springfield, Sparta and New Sarum—the hearts of their communities throughout rural Ontario—shut down due to this government's mismanagement and faulty funding model. If only they could take a minute and put a pause on this review ongoing throughout the province, and maybe working with parents and listening to the community as a whole on how the boundaries are adjusted, we might be able to save some of these communities' schools, which keep the lifeblood in rural Ontario.

I know this government is anti-rural Ontario. They'd like to see as many people as possible move out of rural Ontario, because they can control the population much better with that.

Maybe they could follow through on their actions and put a hold on closing the 600 rural schools in this province and give our kids in rural Ontario a fair chance to do the best they can in their lives.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm glad to be able to add my two minutes in response to the member from Whitby—Oshawa on his thoughtful remarks on Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes.

Speaker, I'm glad to comment on what he had said in bringing up many of the issues, especially when it comes to our students and their needs. Whether they are in kindergarten or all the way through, children have unique needs. Some of them have special needs, but every child has the right to a safe and productive learning environ-

ment. They should all have equitable access to opportunity, to learning.

What we're seeing across our school system: As the member mentioned, we're seeing cuts; we're seeing underfunding; we are seeing resources evaporating. We are seeing infrastructure challenges. We're seeing schools close. We're hearing about busing concerns and four-year-olds having to travel so far to get an appropriate education and napping on the bus alone.

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We're just finding that our school system is not reflecting what we as a society would value, and that is our children. We want them to have access to what they deserve and to learn in an environment that is appropriate for them.

Coming out of a classroom myself, I remember when I first started teaching and the supports that I had at my disposal that I was able to offer to my students. Slowly, those supports were eroded, and over time the educational assistants were no longer there to educate; they were there for behavioural safety and toileting. We were watching cuts come into our classroom through all channels.

It's great that we get to stand in this House and to talk about prioritizing education. I just wish this government would prioritize it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Whitby–Oshawa for his reply.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I thank all the members of the Legislature who provided their comments, and I thank the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education for taking the time from his schedule and being in the Legislature today to listen to the speech that I did give for an hour.

I think we need to refocus, though, on the early part of my speech. I spoke about the goal of education as the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth. It's the underpinning of what I had to say here this afternoon and it also is supported by the views that I heard in consulting with some of the associations, educators and others who feel truly committed to doing the very best they can for the students that they deal with on a day-to-day basis, our future community leaders.

But there are certain realities, Speaker, that they're also dealing with, and just as my colleague from the riding of Oshawa indicated, they don't necessarily have the tools in all cases to effect the type of teaching that they would like to do.

As we move forward here this afternoon with the debate, and as the bill moves forward to the committee structure, I'd like to think that we continue to receive the type of constructive—I underscore "constructive"—suggestions in terms of how this legislation can be improved on. My commentary wasn't entirely negative, Speaker, as you'll recall. I did point out in my speech elements where the bill has advanced and continues to advance some aspects of education. But there's still more work to be done.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Continuing the debate on Bill 92, an act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, I recognize the member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I'm honoured today to rise in this House as the new education critic for the Ontario NDP caucus to participate in the debate on Bill 92, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, 2017.

This bill furthers the evolution of centralized bargaining in Ontario's education sector that began under the Liberal government in 2004 and culminated in the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014, which this legislation proposes to amend.

In my remarks this afternoon, I'm going to spend some time tracing that evolution, describing the various iterations of collective bargaining that took place in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2014. A clear understanding of how we have arrived at Bill 92 is necessary to reliably assess the impact of the changes that are proposed on the next round of collective bargaining in 2017 and how likely, or not, the proposed amendments will be in bringing labour peace and stability.

Certainly there is no disagreement on this side of the House about the importance of labour peace in fostering positive teaching and learning environments, in enabling students to thrive, and in making families feel confident that their children will receive the resources and supports they need at school to get the best possible start in life.

The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, then known as Bill 122, was introduced on October 22, 2013. I was proud, as a newly-elected MPP, to make my inaugural speech during the second reading debate on that bill. My connection to this issue was deeply personal. I had served for 13 years as a school board trustee, from 2000 to 2013. I was elected to the board in the midst of the deeply divisive and rancorous approach to education labour relations that marked the Progressive Conservative government of then-Premier Mike Harris, and resulted, over the period from 1997 to 2003, in 279.5 instructional days lost to teacher strikes and board lockouts.

This is important history. Ontarians should never forget that period of education turmoil and crisis that was deliberately and famously created by the Progressive Conservatives. A number of sweeping changes were introduced by the Conservatives, among them the introduction of a new funding model in 1997 that gave the government complete control of financing education and eliminated the ability of local school boards to raise revenues through municipal property taxes. Instead of local boards negotiating with their local bargaining units and able to fund local education initiatives through property tax levies, the provincial government now controlled both the amount of provincial funding allocated to school boards and also the level of education property taxes. As many of us will recall, this major restructuring of education financing, coupled with the forced amalgamation of school boards, prompted all five teacher unions—representing 126,000 teachers—to walk out for two

weeks in November 1997, affecting 2.1 million students and politicizing—even radicalizing—a whole generation of parent and community activists, myself among them.

I remember vividly the job actions, since my first child had just started JK that year. I remember walking the picket line in solidarity with teachers, my younger child in a stroller, to protest this shocking and unprecedented attack on public education.

Despite his initial denials, Mike Harris later admitted that the express purpose of Bill 160 was to reduce costs by cutting \$600 million out of education expenditures, a trend that continues under the Liberals, as I will discuss later.

Other changes introduced by Bill 160 included placing teacher labour relations under the Labour Relations Act and naming provincial teacher federations as the bargaining agents for teachers while having local school boards remain the employer bargaining agents.

Although the purse strings were now held entirely by the provincial government, the collective bargaining process did not give the province any formal role in collective bargaining. At the same time, local school boards continued to negotiate with their local bargaining units but did not have any ability to fund the agreements beyond what was provided by the province.

In the first round of collective bargaining that followed the election of the Liberal government in 2003, the idea of framework agreements was introduced as a means of addressing the challenges associated with this misalignment. That meant negotiating a master collective agreement provincially which would address key funding issues. Individual school boards and teacher bargaining units were then responsible for negotiating local issues and for ratifying the framework agreements. This initial experiment with centralized bargaining began partway through the collective bargaining process and only applied to collective agreements negotiated with OSSTF and with ETFO. It was informal and voluntary, with a focus that was largely on central problem solving but did lead to signed agreements in 2005.

In the 2008 round, the process became more formalized: Deadlines were set for agreement on key issues and financial incentives were offered to help reach provincial framework agreements. The process was expanded to include all four teacher unions: OSSTF, ETFO, OECTA and AEFO, as well as education worker unions who participated with school trustee associations at provincial discussion tables, or PDTs, with the government acting as facilitators. There were three discussion tables for education support workers: one for CUPE locals, one for OSSTF support worker locals and another that was comprised of locals from a number of other unions, known at the time as the "pizza" table.

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While generally considered a success, the government's stakeholder consultation summary that they have posted with relation to Bill 92 states that, "These voluntary and informal processes were not without their challenges though, including one teachers' federation not

meeting a deadline and receiving a different wage scale than other federations. As well, given that the process was voluntary and informal, there was a growing sense of frustration from the union and employer side with respect to the local implementation of centrally reached agreements."

Similarly, Queen's University Professor Brendan Sweeney noted, in an article called *Education Labour Relations in Ontario*: "Although the provincial discussion tables negotiations were subject to some criticism, most education sector stakeholders perceived them to be valuable. The negotiation processes and the ultimate terms and conditions of the framework agreements have a number of noticeable impacts on the working relationships between school boards, school administrators, teachers, and support workers."

In particular, Sweeney says that the PDT process prioritized provincial actors and reduced the autonomy of school boards and other local stakeholders, affecting the day-to-day relationship between teachers and educational support workers, their unions and school boards. This can be problematic when local actors—those who actually administer the agreements—misinterpret the intent or language in agreements negotiated provincially.

Sweeney also highlights the challenges administering a one-size-fits-all agreement across very different contexts with boards of different sizes and numbers of students and across regions that vary in population density and socioeconomic profiles. He states that, "Ensuring adequate room to manoeuvre within those contexts, while maintaining accordance with collective agreements, remains a priority for school boards and unions throughout the province."

Sweeney also pointed out that the three- and four-year terms of the 2005 and 2008 provincial framework agreements, combined with centralized funding and control over financial aspects of education, led to noticeable changes in the interaction of the union representatives and the school board human resources personnel. In some boards, relationships improved. The length of the contract allowed the parties to engage in dialogue and develop trust in order to address matters in a mutually satisfactory manner. In other boards, especially those with a poor history of labour relations, the longer length increased the number of disputes between the boards and the union representatives about the interpretation of terms and conditions.

Sweeney concludes that longer-term agreements make it more important than ever to develop and foster trust in systems, processes and relationships in the education sector, a point I will come back to later.

The next round of bargaining, in 2012, saw yet another central process, this time with a critical difference. The process was conducted in the context of fiscal restraint, and the end goal of the process was to freeze wages for teachers and education workers.

Bargaining was launched in late February 2012, when the first provincial discussion table meeting was convened by the government with the education sector

unions. Not only were the trustee associations sidelined from the process, but a series of proposals was tabled by the government that led almost immediately to ETFO's refusal to continue to participate. Other unions followed suit, withdrawing from central negotiations. The process itself was then challenged by the unions before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The unions based their OLRB complaint on the actions of the Liberal government, which had gone far beyond the role of facilitator. The Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education, they said, had stepped "into the shoes of the school boards as employers and [were] attempting to dictate the process and contents of school board collective bargaining."

Although the complaint was dismissed, the OLRB chair commented that since the PDT process was voluntary, it was entirely appropriate for the unions to abandon the process if they did not like the government's position. This bolstered the rationale later for a legislated, rather than voluntary, two-tier bargaining process that was introduced with Bill 122.

That summer in 2012, the government entered into a memorandum of understanding with OECTA. Unable to reach agreements with the other unions, the Liberal minority secured the support of the Progressive Conservatives in order to pass Bill 115, known by its Orwellian title as the Putting Students First Act. This legislation allowed the provincial government to set rules that local school boards must adhere to when negotiating with local unions, and also limited the legality of the teachers' unions and support staff going on strike. It required that any collective agreements in the school board sector entered into after August 31, 2012, had to be substantively identical to the OECTA MOU. If school boards and affected unions were unable to reach collective agreements by December 31, 2012, agreements would be imposed upon the parties.

During the debate on the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, my colleague the member for Toronto—Danforth had this to say about Bill 115: "The bill goes well beyond any prior attempt by the provincial government to constrain collective bargaining. The authority given to the minister and cabinet effectively enables them to control both the process of bargaining and the results of bargaining, including the right to strike or lock out, and imposing collective agreements or their forms without any accountability to the Legislature."

The member for Toronto—Danforth went on: "The act interferes with the collective bargaining process set out under the Labour Relations Act on significant matters, such as wages and sick leave. It violates rights to freedom of association under section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada."

"The act seeks to shield the actions of cabinet from any review by the courts, the labour board or boards of arbitration, in contravention of a legal concept as basic as the rule of law."

I want to commend my colleague here for his prescience. He's not a lawyer; however, he predicted

what would happen more than three years later, when Bill 115 was indeed found to have contravened the Charter of Rights, despite the efforts made by the Liberals to insulate themselves from this outcome.

In an article entitled "Collective Bargaining between Teachers and the Province of Ontario, 2012-2013: A Study in Charter Politics," Carleton University Professor Michael Mac Neil writes:

"Bill 115 was very carefully crafted to minimize the likelihood of its being found unconstitutional. The preamble to the act noted that the measures therein are meant to be exceptional and temporary and to seek and encourage 'responsible' collective bargaining. Most importantly, the legislation allowed bargaining to continue for almost four more months before the government could exercise the power to impose the wage freeze. Moreover, it did not remove the right to strike during that period. This, combined with the extensive centralized bargaining that had already occurred and the decision in Fraser and subsequent lower court cases, gave the government confidence that the bill could withstand a constitutional challenge."

However, in the fall of 2012, five unions—ETFO, OPSEU, OSSTF, Unifor and CUPE—took the government to court on behalf of the teachers, other professionals and support staff they represented. They argued before the Superior Court of Justice that the Putting Students First Act, as well as the processes and the procedures that the province had implemented leading up to the enactment of the legislation, had resulted in a breach of their right to freedom of association, as guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

On April 20, 2016, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice agreed, ruling that the Putting Students First Act was unconstitutional. The court held that the Ontario government had infringed on the applicant unions' right to freedom of association by substantially interfering with the collective bargaining process throughout the fall of 2012 and with the passage of the bill.

The ruling stated that between the fall of 2011 and the passage of the Putting Students First Act, Ontario infringed on the applicants' rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to meaningful collective bargaining. The justice further declared, "When reviewed in the context of the charter and the rights it provides, it becomes apparent that the process engaged in was fundamentally flawed. It could not, by its design, provide meaningful collective bargaining. Ontario, on its own, devised a process. It set the parameters which would allow it to meet fiscal restraints that it determined and then set up a program which limited the ability of the other parties to take part in a meaningful way."

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"In its desire to reach an end it had defined, Ontario ran over the rights of the employees. The end sought by Ontario could have been achieved through a more targeted legislative or administrative action and fairer, meaningful collective bargaining. The impact was not just on the economic circumstances of education work-

ers, but on their associational rights and the dignity, autonomy and equality that comes with the exercise of that fundamental freedom.”

Speaker, just as I remember my experiences with Bill 160, just as I remember how the anger that I felt at that time prompted my decision to run for the school board, I remember even more clearly how I felt after Bill 115. As a trustee, I remember the chaos it created in our schools: the loss of extracurriculars for our students, which is sometimes the only thing that keeps some young people going to class every day; the demoralization—the demonization of teachers and education workers; the feeling that things were out of control and that the Liberal government had chosen to engage in a high-stakes showdown without any regard at all for Ontario families and students.

The Liberals’ mismanagement of the education system, their complete lack of concern about the impact on students and families, contributed directly to my decision to run for the provincial Legislature. I know that my colleague the member for Kitchener-Waterloo also remembers Bill 115. Professor Mac Neil from Carleton University writes, “At the same time that bargaining was continuing at the local level during the fall of 2012, unions were not confining their actions to the bargaining table. In September 2012, in a by-election in Kitchener-Waterloo, the New Democratic Party won in a riding for which the Liberals had high aspirations, denying the minority Liberal government the opportunity to form a majority government. The teacher unions appeared to have become actively involved in supporting the NDP candidate and were quickly credited with or blamed for, depending on one’s point of view, the outcome.”

Of course, from our perspective, we would only offer credit, never blame, and I hope all MPPs would agree.

The article goes on to say that after McGuinty’s resignation and the election of Kathleen Wynne, “In what may be a somewhat ironic development, the Liberal Party, after having mended fences to some extent with the teacher unions ... recruited the outgoing president of the OSSTF as their (ultimately unsuccessful) candidate in another by-election that took place on August 1, 2013.”

This is a by-election with which I am intimately familiar, since it brought me here as MPP for London West with strong support from OSSTF members.

Although Bill 115 was repealed on January 23, 2013, the toothpaste was out of the tube. The government’s consultation summary on the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act observes that, “The unintended result of the different central process in 2012 was confusion, animosity and damaged relationships between and amongst the parties.”

While I agree that the result was confusion, animosity and damaged relationships, the instigating factor was not that the process was different. From the perspective of the students whose school year was turned upside down, from the perspective of the families who had to deal with the upheaval and uncertainty of labour unrest, from the perspective of teachers and education workers whose

constitutional rights were trampled in the most cavalier way, the problem was not the process. The problem was the total disrespect for democracy displayed by the Liberals, the total disrespect for the school boards and education sector unions who were the parties legally responsible for negotiating collective agreements.

Following the debacle of the 2012 round, the government went on a major offensive to try to rebuild relationships with education sector partners. To avoid a similar debacle in the future, they also proposed to formalize education sector collective bargaining. Trustee associations, teacher unions and education worker unions were all invited to participate in a consultation process throughout 2013 and 2014 to develop new legislation to guide education sector collective bargaining in the future.

This new legislation, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act—or Bill 122, as I mentioned earlier—created a legislative framework for the collective bargaining practices that had been in place informally between 2004 and 2012.

The act changed the collective bargaining process in two key ways. First, it formalized a proactive two-tier process of central and local collective bargaining. Second, it provided for central grievance arbitration. The act mandated a system of central bargaining on fiscal issues and key matters of provincial education policy.

For support staff, access to central bargaining was not mandatory but was subject to the approval of the minister. Before collective bargaining was able to begin at either level, the central parties were required to negotiate the items that would be bargained centrally. At the central table, the crown was identified as a formal participant but not a party in the sense of being subject to the bargaining and good-faith rules under the OLRA.

While the central table was a tripartite structure, the status of the crown was somewhat different than the status of the other two parties. Local tables maintained the traditional bipartite structure, with bargaining conducted by school boards and local bargaining units. The crown was given the authority to designate additional matters to the central table, and the OLRB was designated as the arbiter of whether those additional items were central or local in cases where the parties did not agree.

The legislation also allowed a two-track arbitration process in which the crown could participate in the arbitration hearing. In addition, although recognized as the employer, local school boards were not permitted to settle a local case without the consent of the crown.

The legislation also created independent strike and lockout windows at both the central and local levels. All parties at both levels were required to follow the conditions laid out in the Labour Relations Act. Additionally, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act required five calendar days’ written notice for parties to be in a legal position to take strike or lockout action.

The act also clarified that a central award decision on language for parties with the same central collective agreement prevailed over any local settlements and/or local arbitration decisions.

The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act received royal assent in April 2014 and was put to the test later that same year. The 2014 round of bargaining involved nine central tables. There were four teacher tables and five education worker tables.

The new requirement that all three parties at each table—the government, the trustee associations and the unions—had to agree on which issues would be centrally bargained immediately created challenges. In the 2008 and 2012 bargaining rounds—the rounds preceding Bill 122—the ministry consulted more or less with unions and trustee associations but made the final decision on which matters would be dealt with centrally.

Under the new legislation, when there was disagreement among the three parties as to what the central issues should be, they had to go to the OLRB for a decision to resolve the disputes. It therefore took from September 2014 to January 2015 just to determine the issues to be centrally bargained with teacher unions, and until June 2015 to determine the issues to be bargained with CUPE.

By April 2015, negotiations had hit an impasse, partly because of a government proposal to eliminate caps on class sizes and to give teachers more non-classroom duties. Strikes in April and May closed high schools in Peel, Durham and Sudbury, with elementary teachers following suit with work-to-rule action. Notices were served of possible teachers' strikes in Halton, Peel, Waterloo, Ottawa-Carleton and Thunder Bay. Following a ruling from the OLRB that the Peel, Durham and Sudbury strikes were illegal, the government introduced back-to-work legislation, which passed on May 28, 2015.

Desperate to ensure labour peace for the start of the 2015 school year, the Premier met with union leaders in July and secured a commitment to get back to the bargaining table. By mid-August, most of the teacher unions were back at the bargaining table, and OSSTF was the first to announce a tentative provincial deal on August 20. Talks later collapsed, however, with CUPE and ETFO, who launched work-to-rule campaigns in September.

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What can we learn from this history lesson on collective bargaining in Ontario's education sector? First, the process matters. But what matters much more is whether the parties are treated with respect and whether there are meaningful opportunities to negotiate.

The 2012 round was conducted using the voluntary, informal PDT process. The 2014 round was conducted within a formal legal framework, but both rounds were almost equally disastrous for students and families, for teachers and education workers and for school boards.

The 2012 round went off the rails from the beginning, when the government announced its take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum and chose to ignore the role of school boards as the legal employers of teachers and education workers. It completely imploded when the government decided to impose collective agreements, a decision that was later found to violate the charter rights of unions to free association.

Despite the cautious optimism that was expressed by stakeholders for the formalized process set out in Bill 122, the 2014 round was only slightly less disastrous than the one before. As the only participant with the authority to develop and implement a legislative framework, the government had an obligation to show the leadership necessary to make the framework work. The Liberals chose not to do so, allowing the escalation of job action during both central and local bargaining.

In the spring of 2016, having made a commitment during the initial consultation to conduct a review of the act once bargaining was complete, the government invited stakeholders to participate in a study to assess if further improvements or tweaking were needed to the act.

In July 2016, a summary of the consultations that were undertaken was publicly posted on the Ministry of Education website. The author of the consultation summary states—no doubt tongue in cheek—that the government wanted to “build on the success of this first round of bargaining” under the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

So here we are debating the legislation that resulted from that review: Bill 92, the government's proposed amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Comparing the consultation summary that's posted on the website to the legislation that is before us today reveals that Bill 92 does include some of the recommendations made by some of the stakeholders who participated in the consultation process. Unfortunately, however, several of these recommendations were highly divisive throughout the consultations on the bill, raising concerns about the effectiveness of these amendments in improving the collective bargaining process for the next round.

I'm now going to turn to what is in Bill 92 and share some stakeholder perspectives on the provisions that are included in the bill.

Currently, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act provides that bargaining for collective agreements under the act may include central bargaining but is not required to include it. Bill 92 changes this rule to mandate that central bargaining must always occur.

Further, it states that for the purposes of central bargaining, every school board must be represented by an employer bargaining agency, and every employee in a bargaining unit must be represented by an employee bargaining agency. This amendment is to take effect during the round of bargaining following the 2017 round.

The bill adds new rules to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act to ensure that all trade unions representing employees other than teachers must either be designated as an employee bargaining agency or be a member of a council of unions designated as an employee bargaining agency for the purposes of central bargaining.

The OLRB's role in the process is set out, and related regulation powers are described. The OLRB would act as a neutral third party to assist education worker groups to

find a central employee bargaining agency. It would initially act in an advisory capacity, but it has the power to make a binding decision if necessary.

A new requirement included in the bill is for five days' notice of any change to the nature or scope of a strike or lockout that would result in the complete withdrawal of instruction or services in one or more schools of a board or the closure of one or more schools of a board.

In addition, the current act prohibits parties from entering into agreements to continue the terms of operation of a collective agreement. Bill 92 adds provisions to permit such agreements in specified circumstances and sets out the process by which an agreement may be entered into and the rules that apply to an extension. A transitional provision addresses the validity of continuation agreements that were entered into when the prohibitions applied.

Other new provisions include when the crown or an employer bargaining agency may provide assistance with local bargaining or require information regarding local bargaining; how conflicts or inconsistencies within a collective agreement between central and local terms may be resolved; agreements or undertakings entered into by the crown for certain purposes under the act; the delegation of powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the minister or from the minister to a ministry employee; and the continuation of the education relations commission and related governance matters.

Speaker, New Democrats absolutely agree that the provision to allow extensions to exist in collective agreements when both parties support an extension is important to ensure labour stability. In light of the tentative agreements that have been negotiated to extend the term of operations of the collective agreements that were ratified during the last round, this amendment is necessary to allow the extensions to be implemented should these agreements be ratified and approved by the crown.

One wonders, however, about the rationale for many of the other changes, especially since the consultation summary repeatedly highlights the lack of consensus on potential changes to the acts. For example, these are various statements taken from the summary:

“In general, there was no clear consensus about changes that are needed.”

“The crown will need to consider the feedback received, and continue to engage in a now open dialogue with its central partners, as the lack of consensus does not indicate a completely clear path for improvements to the act.”

“The parties were in consensus that the length of time taken to reach an agreement on the central/local split of issues was too long. Many of the parties also expressed that as this was the first round of negotiations under the new framework, more experience would likely help address this in subsequent rounds. Some of the parties also felt that the number of issues discussed at the central table was too broad.

“There was no consensus,” however, “across the parties on any amendments to the act to address the

issues mentioned, which does not provide a clear path forward.”

And finally: “While this consultation process has concluded, policymakers should carefully consider all the feedback provided; however, the lack of consensus does not indicate a completely clear path forward.”

The only issue about which there was consensus across stakeholders was with regard to improved French-language capacity. All the French-language parties agreed that there is a French-language capacity issue that needs to be addressed to ensure that they are able to fully participate in all aspects of the bargaining process in the language of their choice.

The report offered several suggestions to facilitate the conduct of future central negotiations entirely in French and to ensure that the specific language of labour relations is understood in both languages. These suggestions included increasing the fluent French-language labour relations capacity of the Minister of Education at the staff and senior management level, ensuring that quick, accurate and knowledgeable translation services are available and providing a knowledgeable interpreter.

Yet despite this consensus around the unique needs of French-language central parties, none of these recommendations are reflected in Bill 92. Instead, the bill includes several issues that were highlighted as being particularly polarizing: for example, the five days' notice provision. The report states that the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act “requires that federations, unions, and trustees' associations/school boards provide at least five calendar days' written notice in advance of any labour disruption at the central or local level. There is no provision in the act for providing specific details and/or providing additional notices should the party make any changes to the nature of the labour disruption.

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“The parties' discussions focussed on whether this provision was appropriate for the sector, if it functioned as intended in the first round of bargaining, and whether or not any amendments could infringe on the right to engage in a labour disruption.

“The parties were split fairly evenly along the following lines:

“—affirming that the status quo is appropriate; or

“—suggesting that amendments need to be made to require the notice to specify the action that will be taken in detail and that a new notice must be provided for every and any change to labour disruption activity.

“A few parties suggested that, if the act is to be amended, it should be to remove the five days' notice requirement and make the parties only subject to the requirements set out in the Labour Relations Act.”

The issue of education worker union participation in central bargaining was also flagged as contentious:

“Education workers' unions must request that the minister establish a central table for their trade union or council. Some unions and local bargaining units chose not to participate in central bargaining.

“Concerns were raised about the possible inconsistency in bargaining outcomes that could result from some parties not participating in central bargaining. In addition, concerns were raised about limiting the ability of trade unions and local bargaining units to freely choose to participate in central bargaining. There was no consensus among the parties about whether central bargaining should be mandatory for all education worker unions and mandatory for all bargaining units in a union.”

So it is somewhat surprising that Bill 92, a bill that is intended to smooth the collective bargaining process and prevent the kind of labour disruptions that occurred during the 2014 round, includes so many issues on which there was no consensus.

I listened carefully last week during the minister’s speech leading off debate on this bill. She stated, “In addition to supporting the tentative extension agreements that have been reached, the proposed amendments will result in an improved process for the next round of formal bargaining.” She went on to say, “We have consulted extensively with our partners and incorporated their perspectives into these proposed amendments. Of course, we must acknowledge and respect the fact that some of the proposed amendments will require continued engagement with our partners, but there is no question that each of these amendments, which collectively serve to refine the legislation, are needed to ensure a flexible, transparent and consistent process going forward.”

Actually, I think there is a question. From the initial responses of the parties who participated in the consultation process, it appears that there are quite a few questions about whether the amendments will improve and strengthen the process going forward.

CUPE, in particular, is concerned about the provisions to make central bargaining mandatory for all education worker unions. They issued a media release on February 22 that stated:

“CUPE Ontario strongly opposes an amendment to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act ... tabled yesterday by the Minister of Education ... that will make central bargaining with the provincial government mandatory for all education workers.

“If passed, the new legislation would take away the rights of school board support workers to democratically determine their participation in central bargaining with the provincial government. Currently, education workers represented by CUPE and other support staff unions may request to participate in central bargaining but are not mandated into the process.

“We have repeatedly shared with the government that, in our view, this is not the part of the act that needs an overhaul. Legislating all education workers into a central bargaining process with the provincial government is wrong. And, as previous successful rounds of bargaining have proved, completely unnecessary. In our view, if it ain’t broke, why fix it?” said Terri Preston, chair of CUPE’s Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee....

“Respect for workers’ rights to determine their participation in the process, as currently provided by the

act, has been fundamental to CUPE’s support for and participation in central bargaining with the provincial government.

“Mandatory central bargaining is anti-democratic,” said Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario. ‘We’re not going to sit idly by while this government attempts to undermine our democratic right to free collective bargaining. We’ve fought this before, and we’ll fight this again.’

“CUPE has continuously made its concerns with this change known to the ministry, through consultations and correspondence, and calls on the minister to delete this change from the draft legislation before it proceeds any further through the legislative process.”

OSSTF is also concerned about the impact of the legislation on the collective bargaining process. Their press release, also issued on February 22, states:

“The new amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act announced Tuesday by Mitzie Hunter, the education minister, have not addressed how to streamline the process or improve labour relations at the bargaining table.

“Although the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation ... participated in the consultations regarding the proposed amendments, it is obvious that the consultations were not taken seriously by the government. ‘There are a number of significant structural flaws in the current legislation and OSSTF/FEESO made 11 recommendations to streamline and strengthen the bargaining process. All were ignored, resulting in none of our issues being addressed and the process continuing to be lengthy and unwieldy,’ said OSSTF/FEESO President Paul Elliott.

“These changes announced by the minister do not improve the legislation and do nothing to make the bargaining process more efficient,” concluded Elliott.”

AEFO’s release, also dated February 22, states:

“The Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) has been made aware of the government’s proposed amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.... A quick read-through indicates that some of these amendments fall short of AEFO’s expectations.

“For example, the government intends to force unions representing support staff (secretaries, teachers’ aides, computer technicians, etc.) to become members of provincial negotiating organizations. However, as its members’ bargaining agent, AEFO already represents them in an official and exclusive capacity.

“Any amendment to the act should lead to a more efficient process,” indicated AEFO President Rémi Sabourin. ‘There is no need to make it more cumbersome,’ he added.”

ETFO’s response to the proposed amendments states, “The government is again, reminded that ETFO provided its own suggestions for amendment to Bill 122 in May 2016. Regrettably and significantly, very few of these have been included in the government document. ETFO continues to believe that its proposals would provide for significant improvements in the manner in which Bill

122 operates and urges the government to reconsider its proposals before finalizing any package to be presented to the Legislature. Particularly we are disappointed that no provision has been made, as suggested in our prior brief, to extend the period in which the parties can agree on central items or have such issues determined so that bargaining is not delayed."

The ETFO brief goes on to say, "ETFO has no issue with continuing central bargaining for all education worker bargaining units, but such central bargaining should not be mandatory but require the agreement of the employee representatives.... ETFO does not oppose procedures to permit stranded units to join other EBAs; however, in our view this should only be permitted with the consent of the EBA."

The ETFO brief urges that "the length of regular collective agreements should not be prescribed but should be left to the bargaining parties to determine," and that "any process which would enable one party to trigger extension negotiations should provide for a full range of bargaining and dispute resolution options."

ETFO does not support the proposal requiring mutual agreement between the crown and employer bargaining agency on a lockout, and strongly opposes "the suggestion that there should be a new five days' notice for any identified escalation of strike/lockout activity."

School boards are also questioning whether the amendments in Bill 92 will ensure what the minister calls a "flexible, transparent and consistent process going forward." On February 10, before the legislation had been tabled, the presidents of the four trustee associations—OPSBA, OCSTA, ACEPO and AFOCSC—co-signed a letter to the minister expressing their significant disappointment and deep concern about a number of issues that were not addressed in the bill.

The final point I would like to make before I wrap up my speech is about the other factors that contribute to labour peace and stability, aside from the collective bargaining framework. Earlier I talked about the importance of the parties treating each other with respect, whatever framework they are operating within. The other essential precondition is ensuring that students have the resources and supports they need to reach their learning potential, especially students with identified special needs, students who are English-language learners, and students who are marginalized by poverty and lack of opportunity.

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Ontario teachers and education workers are passionate about student learning. They are passionate about public education as a means to promote equity and inclusion. But too many teachers struggle to meet the diverse needs of students, with declining resources.

In his remarks opening the debate on this bill, the parliamentary assistant to the minister said that "underlying the success of Ontario's publicly funded education system are two key elements, both of which are intrinsically tied to respectful bargaining that prioritizes mutually beneficial agreements. Those two elements are:

partnership in reaching common goals, and sustainable funding that provides the resources and support necessary to make those goals attainable."

New Democrats couldn't agree more about the importance of sustainable funding that ensures resources and support. However, what we've seen from this Liberal government is a lot of talk and not much action. Over and over, we hear the Liberals claim that education funding is going up, but they don't mention that the rate of increase is actually lower than the rate of inflation. That means revenues are not even keeping pace with costs.

Over the past three years, Liberal budget documents have revealed that the government has not spent more than \$1 billion in dedicated education funding: \$400 million was left unspent in 2014, \$248 million in 2015, and \$430 million in 2016. At the same time, there is a \$15-billion maintenance backlog that has accumulated in deferred repairs across the province.

The budget showed that the Liberals made a \$250-million in-year cut to education in 2014-15, and internal budget documents reveal plans to cut another \$500 million out of education over the next three years.

Parents of students with special needs are disproportionately affected by this government's misplaced priorities. GSN allocations for this school year resulted in 25 school boards receiving \$8 million less funding under the Special Education Grant. Last year saw the lowest annual increase of GSN funding for schools since the Liberals came into office.

In Toronto alone, boards will be dealing with a shortfall of more than \$2 million. The Geographic Circumstances Grant, which helps to keep small and rural schools open, will again be cut this year. Over the last two years, this grant has been cut by almost \$10 million and is now facing another \$7 million in cuts.

Speaker, families understand that Liberal cuts to education will mean fewer supports for students, more layoffs and even more school closures across the province. About 100 good neighbourhood schools have closed across the province since 2011, and 600 Ontario schools are currently part of accommodation review processes.

Instead of facilitating shared use of schools as community hubs, the Declining Enrolment Adjustment, which provides a three-year transition period for lower-enrolment schools, is being cut by half—\$33 million—and it's being shortened to a two-year period. When these cuts are coupled with GSN, underfunding and the pupil accommodation review guidelines, the inevitable outcome is more school closures.

Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals have let Ontario families down—my apology, Speaker. The Premier and the Liberals have let Ontario families down. She has broken her government's promise that she would invest in public education, and the budget shows that education is likely to face further cuts.

The high-needs allocations will be frozen for the next four years, at \$1 billion overall. The Pupil Foundation Grant faces a \$36-million cut. The base top-up funding is

being cut by \$38 million and is slated to be completely eliminated over the next three years.

In the past two years, we have seen hundreds of teachers lose their jobs due to underfunding, as well as ESL educators and early childhood educators. At a time when we should be investing in students' futures, the Liberals are cutting critical programs instead and forcing students to pay the price. This is not the way to ensure the success of Ontario's publicly funded education system. It is not the way to ensure respectful collective bargaining that prioritizes mutually beneficial agreements.

I want to thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to participate in this important debate. I have raised a number of issues in my historical overview of the collective bargaining process in Ontario, issues that I think are highly relevant as we look at this bill and reflect on the provisions that it proposes and we use the experience of the past to assess whether the provisions that are set out in this bill will actually do what the bill is supposed to do, which is to streamline the collective bargaining process, to strengthen the collective bargaining process, and to improve the collective bargaining process.

Based on the historical overview I have provided, I think some serious questions have been raised about the efficacy of this bill in actually achieving that labour peace and stability that we want to see following future rounds of collective bargaining.

I look forward to listening to further debate on this legislation, to hearing the questions and comments from my colleagues, and to watching as this bill moves forward in this province and we work to ensure that all students have opportunities to have the supports and resources they need to thrive.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I want to thank the member from London West for her presentation.

Questions and comments on the presentation just made by the member for London West?

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** I would like to thank the member from London West for her presentation and her review—revisionist history, so to speak—of the chronology of events from 2003 on, I believe.

This was a government that was prior to the Conservatives that we took over from, and they had no idea that education was even part of provincial jurisdiction. They never mentioned education once in their nine-page—leading up to the election, prior to that, education was never mentioned anywhere in their platform. Suddenly, now education is front and centre.

I listened to her, and she spoke about chaos and mismanagement. However, all this mismanagement has taken place over the last 12 or so years, according to the NDP, and they never saw fit to mention this or to even put it in their platform. So that's total negligence on their part, then. They are to blame for any erosion in the system, which is not the case. Ontario has one of the best education systems anywhere in the world. This is not partisan spin; this is factual. We have people from all

over the world, from other jurisdictions, coming to Ontario to see what's right with our education system.

Mind you, Mr. Speaker, there's always room for improvement, and that's why we're trying to do that through the collective bargaining act. This was something that came together based on consultations with school boards and unions. They decided this was the way they wanted to go. We are just fine-tuning what was proposed by all parties concerning this. We're doing this for the benefit of our students, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Speaker, I appreciate the comments on Bill 92 from the member from London West. She went back in time with a reference to labour peace, and referred back to Bill 160. I remember the bumper stickers at the time that said, "Remember Bill 160." I don't know how many people now do remember Bill 160. I think many may have forgotten what happened back then. As the member said, the unions walked out on 2.1 million students. It went on for two weeks.

I know that my constituency office is a short walk up from the local high school, so for two weeks we had the picketing teachers doing a circle from the high school up to my office—a number of them at noon hour, and at quitting time they would block the parking lot exits at well. There will be people in town who do remember that.

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Even at the time, they may not have been aware of why the teachers were striking. Many assumed it was for an increase in pay, and quite honestly, I'm not sure why they were striking, either. It really was not articulated that clearly.

I made mention of mandatory centralized bargaining—we've seen information from CUPE opposed to that; it's out on social media, and they have a petition—and the uploading of the cost of education back at the time, when the province removed \$3 billion in education costs off of property taxes—again, something that was welcomed at the time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm glad to be able to stand, and I wish I had more time to make comments after the thoughtful remarks from our colleague from London West on Bill 92.

I take full and total exception to the comments from the member from Durham, who referred to them as revisionist history. Absolutely not—well researched, well thought out and absolutely clear, taking us back in history, from the beginning through to where we are now. I appreciate the time and clearly the commitment to getting the facts all in order to get us to this point today and to this debate on Bill 92.

It's interesting. There's so much to talk about, but I'm just going to highlight a few pieces. It's interesting that the two by-elections, Kitchener-Waterloo and London West, really drew from the strength of the community

and their sense of fairness when it came to Bill 115 and the attack on teachers. I'm going to throw myself in the mix there. I had been a teacher at the time who had been kicked in the teeth by Bill 115 and this Liberal government. That fired me up, that fired a number of my colleagues up to take it to the streets and take it to the government, and now I'm standing here as a result of that. I cut my teeth on Bill 115 because it was, as we know, unconstitutional.

But here we are again with this government stirring it up and mixing things up with collective bargaining. I hope that in the province of Ontario, we will continue to see any kind of meaningful negotiation when it comes to collective bargaining. We're seeing less and less autonomy when it comes to local bargaining, and Speaker, I'll remind you and everyone in this House that each of our boards, each of our local communities, has unique needs. There are central topics that, yes, we want to see continuity across the province on, but our communities have local issues. We should be seeing local bargaining respected.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Time for one last question or comment on the presentation made by the member for London West.

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** It is an honour to rise today to talk about Bill 92. I would like to thank all of the members for their very thoughtful comments on this bill. I know each one of us comes to this place with our own point of view and our own bias about how we think things should run, but there are a couple of positive things I do want to point out regarding this bill.

It does highlight the importance of amending the act to permit extensions to existing collective agreements. This amendment, while still premised on robust talks, will allow interested parties to agree to continue to the term of operation of collective agreements.

Working with partner trustee associations—and I do want to give a shout-out to our local trustee association. They are key partners. They're on the ground. They're closest to our students. They're working together strongly with our schools. We were successful in reaching a tentative two-year agreement to extend the 2014 to 2017 collective agreements with ETFO, with OECTA, with CUPE, with the Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario, the Ontario Council of Education Workers and the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, AEFO.

I think it's extremely important to acknowledge that these are some successes that we have had. If these agreements are ratified and approved by the crown, it will allow all parties to stay focused on what matters most, and that is, of course, our students.

It's always regretful to hear anyone say that they feel like they've been kicked in the teeth. This bill is something that we certainly hope will help streamline the process.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for London West for her reply.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would like to thank the member for Durham, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, my colleague the member for Oshawa, and the member for Kingston and the Islands for offering their thoughts on my remarks on Bill 92.

I want to say to the member from Kingston and the Islands that, absolutely, we agree—I said that in my speech—that when there is agreement of all parties for an extension, there should be a mechanism to enable that extension to be ratified and implemented. The concern that I raised is that this bill, instead of just dealing with the extension, does much, much more than that. There have been a lot of concerns expressed about what's in the bill and what's not in the bill, aside from the provision around extending a collective agreement.

The consultation summary that is posted on the Ministry of Education's website repeats throughout that there was no consensus around almost all of the issues that were addressed during the consultation process. For the government to sort of pick and choose what it's going to put in that bill, when the government should be aware that feelings were very polarized and divisive about those provisions, really makes one wonder how this legislation is going to be effective in bringing about labour peace.

We know from the historical summary that it really doesn't matter the framework in which these negotiations take place. What matters is that the parties respect each other and want to engage in meaningful negotiations.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that the following report was tabled: the report of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario concerning the review of allowable expenses to November 6, 2016, under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, section 14(b).

Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Ottawa–Vanier with her maiden speech in this Legislature.

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** Merci beaucoup. Monsieur le Président, c'est un grand honneur pour moi de me lever aujourd'hui pour prononcer mon discours introductif, selon la meilleure tradition parlementaire.

Cette législation représente évidemment un aboutissement pour vérifier un environnement qui soit destiné à améliorer nos institutions, ce en quoi je crois fondamentalement. Pour l'éducation de nos enfants et l'appui aux éducateurs, je suis ici devant vous.

L'éducation a joué un grand rôle dans ma vie, et c'est dans ce contexte-ci que j'aimerais partager les raisons qui m'ont poussée à solliciter le privilège de représenter la circonscription d'Ottawa–Vanier. Je crois profondément à une démocratie participative, à la responsabilité des dirigeants d'assurer une prospérité qui n'exclut personne.

Je veux ici rendre hommage à l'honorable Madeleine Meilleur qui avait si bien représenté Ottawa–Vanier pendant toutes ces années. Madame Meilleur's wisdom, hard work and open mind were well known in this riding and in this House. She epitomized for me the thoughtful politician that I aspire to be.

I decided I would summarize my remarks in the following three themes: liberté, égalité, fraternité. This is the title of an article that I wrote a long time ago, but I think that summarizes very much the reasons why I sought to enter politics.

Je suis la première fille de parents qui venaient de très grandes familles. My mother was the 17th child in her family. She was the last. This huge family lived in Montreal in a smallish house in a neighbourhood populated by very large families, Rosemont. My dad also came from a very large family. He was number 10 in a family of 11, the youngest boy and the only child in both families who was selected by a religious congregation to attend classical college and eventually go to university.

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My mother left school at 15 to work at different jobs, and eventually my parents opened my dad's law office together in a two-bedroom apartment above la caisse populaire. This is where I was born: in the law office. I was predestined to love the law.

I attended the Couvent des Soeurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et de Marie, and I think my education with the nuns provided me with an early feminist education. I want to give homage to the education that I received as a young woman.

Mes parents étaient des gens ouverts d'esprit qui encourageaient leurs enfants à poursuivre leur éducation. Ils étaient optimistes et travailleurs et, surtout, avaient une grande générosité d'esprit.

Voulant être journaliste, j'ai complété des études en droit et j'ai travaillé à Radio Canada International pendant mes études. I started law school early at 18 and graduated at 21. I had a fabulous legal education. I worked in a legal aid office and had professors that pushed me. I worked in a big law firm as well, I eventually clerked at the Supreme Court of Canada, and I was offered a fabulous scholarship as the Frank Knox Memorial Scholar to attend Harvard Law School.

That is where I realized how important it was to use a law degree to diminish inequality of income. During my stay at Harvard Law School, I volunteered for unemployed workers there, and it was in that context that I decided to commit to social justice as a future career. I then moved to Ontario for romantic reasons.

My parents are part of a generation who did better than their parents and who were given opportunities. For my mother, the fact that I and my sisters were able to graduate from secondary school and go to university was in itself a victory, an advantage that she did not have.

Je suis reconnaissante, évidemment, de l'éducation que j'ai eue : une éducation qui reflétait la diversité d'opinion, la curiosité intellectuelle et l'aspiration à un savoir et une pratique engagée.

There are the many issues that I have been active on throughout my career and that motivate my political engagement today.

On the liberty front, I have worked with clients within the legal system and represented people in a variety of settings. I believe, fundamentally, that a democratic

society aims to obey the rule of law. It resists arbitrariness at all costs. It obliges itself to a series of measures and processes that are sometimes demanding but well worth it, and they ought to be.

Liberty is about ensuring that we prevent abuse of power. It also means respecting the federalism challenges and opportunities. This was part my constitutional law work throughout these years.

I have also been committed to égalité—equality for all. My first comment will be to equality for indigenous communities. I had opportunities as a dean to support the development of reconciliation efforts and to open schools in Cree and Innu territory. I continue to believe that it's the challenge of this generation to do something right on that file.

J'ai toujours été engagée dans la cause franco-ontarienne. My commitment to the Franco-Ontarian community is well known. I was the first woman president of l'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario—this was quite a while ago—but also was instrumental in working in a French day care in London, Ontario. This commitment to ensuring that the francophone community has the institutions that it needs to continue to prosper and give to Ontario what it has to give is part of my commitment.

I have to say that I have always been quite committed to the equality of women, to ending violence against women. It's the time to do it. We cannot wait for another generation to do this.

I have also been committed to ensuring equal treatment for persons who are differently abled. I had the opportunity to communicate and create tables of discussion on how to better prepare and support disabled workers. This will continue to be part of my commitment to my riding and to fellow Ontarians. I have also always been committed to equality for all cultural groups in Ontario and all religions, as I indicated last week.

Solidarité, fraternité : le mot « fraternité » est souvent synonyme de « solidarité » parce qu'il représente une avancée dans la conception de nos désirs de voir les socioeconomic rights being made a reality. So I speak in solidarity with the view of saying it's access to prosperity for everyone, the right to an environment, right to education, right to housing, right to health, right to water and right to the environment more generally for this generation and for ongoing generations.

Un environnement juridique qui est sain permet une prospérité qui respecte les droits des Ontariens et travaille constamment à l'amélioration de la qualité des débats et des politiques publiques.

My experience as an academic, as a law reformer, as a director of an NGO, has led me to be convinced that we need evidence-based policy and lived-experience-based consultation. We cannot afford to move forward in developing policies that are not grounded in good statistics and good knowledge, that do not have to include the range of perspectives and the range of opinion.

Je crois en un Ontario qui se voit comme un leader dans l'innovation, avec une économie d'avant-garde et d'innovation, et qui s'assure toujours que tous et toutes peuvent participer pleinement. C'est pourquoi c'est un grand honneur pour moi de représenter le comté d'Ottawa–Vanier, un comté qui compte beaucoup de diversité et dont 5 % de la population sont Inuits, Métis ou Premières Nations.

All cultural groups coming from all around the world live in Ottawa–Vanier. We have diversity of income. We are—and represent some of the challenges that are facing Ontario, but we are doing it and confronting them together. My commitment is to give to Ottawa–Vanier my passion for justice, my energy and all my experience to improve their lives and the lives of Ontarians.

Merci beaucoup.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Merci beaucoup.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** What an interesting maiden speech given by the member from Ottawa–Vanier. I think all members in the House can agree on the premise of her maiden speech. Different points came out. Certainly justice for all under the law and evidence-based policy is something that those on this side of the House are adamant on: that we should research things out before we make policy because, ultimately, mistakes can be greater without that, and I was glad to hear the member say that.

I was most impressed by her passion for what she is doing now. Certainly in her previous life, passion was probably there all the time, the way she has spoken, and certainly her experience in the other world, if I can put it that way, is evident. It does this House a lot of good to have people who have life experiences as members of the Legislature, because all of us can relate to those in our ridings who have different abilities, different work, different experiences, and when we have life experiences such as the member has told us today, it will help her in her work with her constituents and help her in the Legislature.

I think, too, it came out that she will work for her constituents. That's why we're here: to work for those people who elected us. I can see that she will be passionate about that. I must say I was glad to be here today to hear her maiden speech.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I would like to congratulate the member from Ottawa–Vanier on her maiden speech today. Her time since she has been in this House has been very eloquent, and it's a pleasure to be able to have another woman sit in the Legislature who brings so much to the table, and I'm sure she does that within her own riding.

She spoke of her base being law and social policy and how she can implement that into the lives of people of Ontario in making the world a better place.

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She's in a good place to do just that. She's part of the government, so she can bring all of those things that we

know people of this province are fighting for and make sure she uses that base and that knowledge to push the Premier and to push her caucus colleagues to do the right thing by people in the province of Ontario when we know that we have folks struggling. They are the kinds of things that she comes from. I know that she will bring a lot to the table when it comes to speaking with her caucus colleagues.

It's great having the opportunity of doing your maiden speech, just to give that little bit of insight into where you come from and the things you plan to bring to the table, and to speak of your family, because we don't always get those opportunities. It gave her that opportunity to thank her parents for being diligent and ensuring she had that good education. Her siblings, I believe, she mentioned also.

It's a unique place and a unique thing that we do here in the Ontario Legislature. Congratulations on your maiden speech. I look forward to the rest of today's debate speaking to the amendment of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Ottawa–Vanier on her maiden speech. It was so eloquently done. It was nice and sweet and succinct. I like that.

She alluded to her grandparents, I believe, having 17 children. That's two baseball teams, roughly. That large a family doesn't happen too often anymore anywhere in Ontario, anywhere in Canada. Maybe in other parts of the world it does happen on a rare occasion.

It's so wonderful and refreshing to hear her talk about her family and her experiences and her contribution and her volunteerism to our community and to this province. She has a passion about making the lives of women in Ontario and in Canada better, and it's wonderful.

We're all here to make people's lives better. We may differ in how we go about doing it, but she is very passionate about what she does throughout the communities in her legal experience. I'm sure she could have practised law anywhere and made a lot more money, but she decided to commit herself to community service and to give back to her community and to give back to this great country. It's always commendable to see that.

She's a great addition to this House, and she will work hard to contribute not only to our party but to all members of this House. We can learn from her experiences and from her eloquence and from her passion and from her commitment to the province of Ontario.

Again, congratulations on your maiden speech. Very well done.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments? The member for Lennox–Addington–Frontenac—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Close enough.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Close enough.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you, Speaker. I commend the new member on her maiden speech. I think this was the first time ever, actually, that I've heard a member from the Liberal benches speak about liberté, as well as égalité and fraternité—of course, the motto of the First French Republic in the French Revolution. It's very seldom that I've actually heard a Liberal member speak those words in the House. I hope it's not just words but it is a deep passion for the member and that we'll always advocate for liberté, égalité and fraternité.

I just wanted to comment on this. Here's the quote from that model:

“Liberty consists in being able to do anything that does not harm others: thus, the exercise of the natural rights of every man” or woman “has no bounds,” other than those that guarantee other members of society the same enjoyment of those rights.

“Égalité” is fairly intuitive, as the member spoke. The law must be the same for all, both protection and punishment. I will not expand on that any further, but on the fraternity, this is an important element that I think we need to recognize. The fraternity is us. Our job as the institution is to protect those other two, liberty and égalité. That is our collective responsibility as a fraternity of legislators.

I welcome the member's advocacy and protection of liberty, égalité and fraternity.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I thank the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. We return to the member for Ottawa-Vanier for her reply.

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** I want to thank the members from Perth-Wellington, from Hamilton Mountain and from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for their thoughtful words, as well as my colleagues on this side for all of their support. It's the beginning of a new adventure for me. You can count on my support.

I want to say: Often we have been asked, “What do you mean, ‘Liberté, égalité et fraternité’?” My point is simply that we need all three. It would be irresponsible and immoral that liberty would be only for the very few. It would be inappropriate and closing our minds to simply focus on equality without offering freedom of expression and association, which prevent us to move forward. All of them could not exist if we don't have rules so that we work on it together. I think that's the commitment that I make today: to continue to work with you in this House and for my riding for liberté, égalité et fraternité.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** First off, I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 92. Of course, I also wish to commend the newly elected member from Ottawa-Vanier on her maiden speech and, as has been commented, laying out so many of the principles that we hold dear, not only in the province of Ontario but in Canada and around the world: justice and freedom for all, and the rule of law. We could go on and on. I think that's very

important in a maiden speech, to establish and to set that bar.

We all remember our maiden speeches. Mine was a couple of decades ago. I had a chance to talk about the riding and I also recall reading my grandfather's maiden speech, which would have been in probably 1945. Again, military and coming right out of the Second World War and the principles that you've articulated—obviously we fought for that. Our parents, our grandparents fought for that in that war and in many wars before that.

I will mention that I also thank the member for Ottawa-Vanier for giving us a little bit of a pause, a break from Bill 92, but I will wade back into a piece of proposed legislation that's the titled School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, 2017. We're told that the bill, the proposed legislation, will better enable us to strike a balance between provincial and local collective bargaining. It makes centralized bargaining mandatory. There are some objections to that that I hope, in my 20 minutes, I'll have time to address.

Of course, Bill 92 is not to be confused with a previous Bill 92, the public sector pay freeze legislation, 2012. Bill 92 in many ways has been spawned from the previously debated and passed Bill 115.

We have a new bill before us, Speaker. It's an enhancement or a proposed model for collective bargaining, the two-tier system of collective bargaining that we now have in the province of Ontario, with respect to those who work in the education field, and a model that—this is related—just brought us to a two-year contract extension for OSSTF. I am a former member of OSSTF; that stands for Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

#### 1600

You can see the intention behind this two-year contract, given that we will have an election in a little over a year from now. That may be a good thing, to get over that hump rather than the government negotiators—and I never know who they are; we always know the names of the union negotiators. But it will, perhaps, better enable the government negotiators at the table with the teachers to get over that hump rather than, in a sense, being under the gun of offering money to unions just before an election. In that sense, maybe that's a good thing. OSSTF is going along with that. I understand that some of the other teacher unions will be following and so we'll probably, I assume—you can't speculate in this business—see them ratify that approach.

With this legislation, it's not the kind of legislation that really amazes anybody, but it does kind of amaze me that the government is so eager to introduce this kind of housecleaning approach. They're obviously still trying to fix a problem that was created by this government, again, going back to the aforementioned Bill 115.

But there are so many other issues in the area of education that are plaguing our system, plaguing our schools. Things are out of balance. There's an argument, through this legislation, that the two-tier collective bargaining system is out of balance, but there are other

things that are out of balance in our education system as a whole and the negative effects on the number one stakeholder in our education system, and that is the students who attend. This legislation goes on and on about the approach that they're taking. I've scanned the legislation. I don't think it mentions the word "student." I don't think it mentions the word "pupil." "Pupil" is perhaps the bureaucratic word, or the older word, for a student. I'm sure it mentions teachers; I don't think it mentions parents. So this is not necessarily a piece of legislation—it is education legislation but it's really not about students; or parents, for that matter, or communities.

What I see with respect to the operation, the governance of our education system, in my mind, is a misallocation of scarce resources. So many of the debates are around money. Of course, collective bargaining is primarily about money. Whether it's wages or salaries, hours of work or amounts of sick time, amounts of holiday time or pensions, invariably it's about money.

It's about, of course, working conditions. As a former high school teacher, I never really found the job necessarily dangerous, although I did get my job at Christmas because one of the students beat up the former teacher. But other than that, most of these issues are around money.

We've just heard the one-hour lead. There was actually 10 minutes of that one-hour lead presented last week from our education critic, Lorne Coe, who is the member for Whitby-Oshawa. He described aspects of the misallocation of resources—or "scarce resources," to use the economic term. I note his argument for better usage of our schools as community hubs.

One example I hope to intertwine with my discussion—and I know that a number of the teacher unions addressed this during pre-budget hearings. We're all aware of the race of this government to shutter the doors of so many of our small rural, small-town schools. In my view, it regrettably sentences more young people—very young people—to yet even longer school bus rides to school in the morning and back again at night.

Scanning the legislation, there's no mention of school buses there or transportation; again, no mention of students, no mention of pupils, no mention of parents in this legislation, even though it is education legislation.

As a former teacher, I know a little bit about the high school environment. I never did go to teachers' college. Like I say, I was hired at Christmas. There was a need for somebody in the shop wing. I taught agriculture and environmental science. I have the utmost respect for Ontario's teachers. I keep in touch with so many of my colleagues, but I really keep in touch with so many of my former students. I have that respect for teachers, for educators, for the support workers—those janitors who know everything that goes on in the school, especially the big high schools like the one I taught at, with well over 1,000 students. You can't be out in the hall all the time and you can't be behind the school all the time and in the parking lot, during breaks and during noon hours,

breaking up the fights, which actually was part of my job as a teacher. I'm not sure whether teachers today break up fights or ride herd at noon hour—maybe other people are brought in to do that—because I've been away from the system for a number of years.

It can be a tough job, but, quite sincerely, it is a very rewarding job. I loved the job. You work from 9 to 5 in the school. Sometimes, people do leave before 5 o'clock. My job required coming in Sunday afternoon because I was managing a 50-foot greenhouse as part of the agriculture program.

I come from a family of farmers and teachers. My father was a teacher at a number of levels, and my grandmother was a teacher. I know my father did negotiate on behalf of high school teachers with the Halton Board of Education, as I recall. During my tenure as a member of OSSTF, I certainly did not consider myself a union man. We did not go out on strike. We would never think of going out on strike.

My grandmother was a teacher in the one-room school system—of which I'm a proud graduate, at SS number 12, Shands public school, a one-room school. That's the kind of school where the teachers do run the school. When you have one teacher and eight grades, the students, especially in the senior grades, understand that it's their responsibility to make sure that things run adequately and in a good way.

When you craft legislation like Bill 92, it is important to speak to people on the front lines. I know there was a consultation—well, I know now there was a consultation process for this legislation. I just found out. Our critic may have known about it. I don't know whether he attended any of the consultations. But with all the presentations that we heard on the finance committee from many of the teacher unions, from the school boards, nobody mentioned this legislation. I thought that maybe the unions got blindsided by this. CUPE is not happy, but I don't think they got blindsided. They knew this was coming, I'm sure.

I just think it's unfortunate. I don't recall reading anything in the papers about this legislation or in social media. I think it's unfortunate that when something like this lands on our plate—I suppose it was last Thursday. I will say, on behalf of the official opposition, that we have not had a chance to discuss this legislation. We will do that tomorrow during our caucus meeting.

1610

But it's so important to talk to people on the front lines. Nobody in my constituency has sent me an email about it because they don't know about it, really. I'm not sure whether many of the people in the profession know about this—whether janitors in the schools, people doing maintenance, education assistants or teachers even know about this legislation. Maybe that's the way things run. I know that when I was teaching, I really had no idea what the deliberations were at the board level or what the deliberations were at the union level—not that OSSTF was a union back in the 1970s, in my view. We considered it a professional organization because we considered ourselves professional, not union people.

I think it's very important that whoever is behind this legislation has a feel for what's going on inside the classroom. As I've said, it doesn't talk about students, but I hope we had an adequate consultation. You have to talk to teachers, talk to the principals—we heard a bit through some of the organizations—talk to the trustees, talk to the parents. I don't know whether anybody talked to the students about this. Why do we have these schools? Why do we have teachers? It's for the students. Why do we have hospitals? It's for patients. I don't know whether the people who we built this system for were consulted on this; probably not.

Again, that's why we spend billions and billions of dollars on our education system. It's the number two draw as a ministry on the provincial treasury, and that's not counting university budgets and community college budgets.

We did hear from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, OECTA. Ann Hawkins came before finance committee during our fairly recent pre-budget consultations. She's the president of the Catholic teachers' association. She didn't talk about collective bargaining. She didn't talk about this legislation that we started debating the first week back. She pointed out yet another promise of this government that has not been lived up to:

"During the 2014 election, the Liberal Party campaigned on a platform to invest in social programs and social infrastructure. Premier Kathleen Wynne put the matter bluntly"—and again, here's a quote from Kathleen Wynne—"That's what governments exist to do," she said. However, in many ways, this pledge has not matched reality." According to Ann Hawkins, Ontario, as she pointed out, "still has the lowest spending on public programs per capita of any province in Canada." She identified this as "not a proud achievement." It always raises the question: Well, just what is this government spending the billions of dollars on?

One thing that Ann Hawkins did address on behalf of the Catholic teachers' union—she spoke of school closures, the impact on rural Ontario. The government is doing this "as a way to improve cost efficiency and deal with enrolment issues. However," Hawkins suggested, there are more fruitful alternatives available, alternatives "that would not disrupt the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of students, families and education workers."

One of the alternatives she spoke about was shared services. She talked about "a feasibility analysis of 11 school boards carried out by Deloitte in 2012, which found that shared services in areas such as energy and transportation"—obviously, let's put everybody together on the same school bus—"could produce ... annual savings of \$3 million to \$8 million." There's a 13% to 28% savings on school boards' annual total expenditures.

OECTA is well aware of the pain in closing schools, and she impressed on the committee that there are other ways to utilize space in schools rather than closing them. This was actually articulated by our education critic as well.

Indirectly—talking about money and saving money—that leaves more money to be spent on other areas, and that could probably serve the teacher unions well during collective bargaining and again even under the enhanced system described in this proposed legislation, Bill 92.

We wrapped up the finance hearings. There were 157 deputants and we received something like 90 submissions. I do commend the researchers who put together the report and the recommendations.

I want to mention Susan Viets and Carrie Hull, who are employed by the Legislative Assembly. They did a truly Herculean—I don't know if I pronounced that correctly or not—successful effort to compile all the advice and the recommendations that we heard, including advice we heard from the teacher unions and the school boards.

But collective bargaining really didn't come up. It's a budget issue; it's an issue for finance committee hearings. So I'm just not sure where this one came from.

We've been hearing from CUPE. I haven't heard too much opposition about this legislation. I haven't heard too much at all about it, although on social media, CUPE—there's a union that represents 260,000 members—has a petition up on Facebook challenging Bill 92 as taking away workers' democratic rights. I understand that OSSTF, my former association, has some concerns. I think they have some concerns about certain things that have not been included in this legislation.

I'll wrap up there, Speaker. It's surprising, when I look at this bill—I thought this was a bit of a sleeper. Once you start talking about it, you realize there probably is a fair bit we could discuss, to try and get this two-tiered system to run a little better.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I listened intently to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who certainly made some good points. I know that Mr. Barrett had been a teacher in the past, so I'm sure he has a bit of insight on how the process works.

In reference to this particular bill, Bill 92, there are some problems with it, and not everybody's on board with this legislation, and I'll give you an example.

CUPE, for instance, is afraid that support workers will be put on the back burner by the government. Their priorities will not be properly represented because the government will be focused on satisfying other entities. That makes sense. Obviously, they're going to be dealing with the teachers, who are the main bargaining unit. A lot of the support workers and very different communities—their priorities are different. In different areas of the province, there are different issues, and they feel they'll get lost in the shuffle. That's understandable, because if the government can simplify it and just deal with one body who governs all the other bodies, or they're attached to those bodies, it certainly makes the considerations of the other bodies inadequate because the government's not focusing on it.

One of the biggest groups is against it. OSSTF is against the new legislation because it has not addressed

how to streamline the process or improve labour relations at the bargaining table, which is probably 90% of the game. You've got to have good relations at the bargaining table, and you can't have one side or one cabinet or one government-sponsored group dictating to the particular group without all the other groups that are involved in education represented properly.

The government keeps touting that they want everybody involved. I even heard the member from Orléans talk about involving everybody in the process and making everybody have a say. Well, you're not doing that here.

The OSSTF participated in the consultations—yes, they did—but regarding the proposed amendments, they feel the consultations were not taken seriously—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** Thank you to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I didn't realize you were a teacher. If you were a teacher now, what you taught back then would be something—

**Mr. Bill Walker:** If you hadn't closed the schools, he still could.

1620

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** I'm sure he was a fine teacher, too.

This bill, Bill 92, came forth through extensive consultation. What's in this bill and the amendments are directly what the parties wanted and what they're proposing. We're here debating this bill—because, yes, it's a debate and any bill can be improved. We're here to listen to the comments from all sides.

What this bill proposes to do: Specifically, it provides improvements to flexibility, transparency and accountability. The ultimate benefits would be improving the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Think about this, Mr. Speaker: Two million students and their families will benefit from this bill, all of whom rely strongly on a stable and sustainable publicly funded education system every day.

The proposed legislation would amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act to improve flexibility by allowing collective agreements to be extended to support flexibility and stability for all parties, including students and parents. It also allows the minister to extend the period, whether it's two years or three years. Wouldn't it be nice for parents to have the stability of having five years without collective bargaining?

When I was a trustee, the problem was that by the time a negotiation was finished and getting implemented, it was time to get back to the board to continue further negotiations. This will allow of that, Mr. Speaker—

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jack MacLaren:** Currently, the act provides that collective bargaining for collective agreements under the act "may include" central bargaining. This bill changes

this rule to require that central bargaining must always occur.

All trade unions representing employees other than teachers must be designated as an employee bargaining agent. The Ontario Labour Relations Board role in the process is set out and related regulation-making powers are included.

Notice must be given of any change to the nature or scope of a strike or lockout that will result in the complete withdrawal of instruction or services.

This bill prohibits parties from entering into agreements to continue the term of operation of a collective agreement—or the act. This bill adds provisions to permit such agreements in the related circumstances and sets out the process by which an agreement may be entered into and the rules that apply to an agreement.

Mr. Speaker, these are all changes to a former bill that should have been done before—a bill before that had mistakes, had errors, had shortcomings. All we're doing is correcting something that was done wrong the first time, and that is too bad. As much as these are needed, it should have been done right the first time.

I would say we're wasting our time here on education speaking about this. We should be focusing on the quality of education that our children are getting, things such as reading, writing and arithmetic. That's where we need improvement. That's where we're failing our kids. Our scores are going down compared to other jurisdictions. That's where we need to be spending our time and efforts, and improve.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Ted Arnott):** We have time for one last question or comment. The member for Hamilton Mountain.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I listened intently to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and his thoughts on Bill 92, which is an amendment to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

I believe that the member failed to talk about the history of how we got to this position. Yes, it is in large part due to the Liberals, with Bill 115 and Bill 122. There's always something on fire with the Liberals and them throwing out quick legislation to make up the difference. But we also know that back in 1997, when the Conservatives were in power, Mike Harris changed the funding formula and amalgamated school boards. That put 126,000 teachers on the street and put 2.1 million students in disarray of their education system.

But here, again, we have the Liberals trying to fix something else that they've created in the province of Ontario because there really is never just a peaceful time when it comes to labour collective bargaining and this government. The government is usually trying to jump ahead without doing proper consultation, without making sure that they have a collective agreement between folks, between all the different unions, to make sure that we don't have unrest in our schools as we did back in the Harris days, to make sure that they get things right so that kids can go to school, that they can get an education, and

that the teachers are happy in a good, safe working place to make sure that that happens.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I thank the members for their responses.

I indicated that we did hear from CUPE. We really haven't heard from the teacher unions on this, but we did hear from the four umbrella trustee associations. They expressed significant disappointment with respect to a number of issues that they are concerned will not be brought in as amendments. All four school board associations "articulated their firm commitment to sequenced bargaining."

Secondly, they "are concerned that the proposed amendments do not reflect the ability to decrease the number of central bargaining tables. Moreover, as proposed, the amendments could, at some point, result in greater, not fewer central bargaining tables."

Lastly, in a letter that I received, they expressed their "deep concern with respect to the crown's unwillingness to address the possibility of continuous sanctions within the sector simultaneously at both the central and the local level." The concern they feel is "further exacerbated given the proposed amendments to the structure of the act which would allow for the possibility of collective agreements expiring at different times." They feel "the education sector could find itself in a state of perpetual sanction." As they indicate, that "is not in the best interest of students" and would erode "public confidence in the publicly funded education system."

So they're hoping that we, in this Legislature, will rectify some of those problems. Speaker, that's from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, the public school boards, AFOCSC and ACEPO.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West and speak to Bill 92, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, 2017. This legislation amends former Bill 122 after the initial round of negotiations with education workers for a new collectively bargained contract, which began in 2015.

Speaker, as a New Democrat, collective bargaining is near and dear to my heart. It's no secret that when employees work collectively to better the interest of their co-workers and colleagues, all are better off. To do this, workers become members of a labour union, and on behalf of its members, the union advocates for better working conditions, fair wages and so much more.

New Democrats are committed to making it easier for workers to build solidarity and work together. We want to make it easier to join a union. To this end, we are calling for card-check certification and first-contract arbitration. These measures will reduce the possibility of intimidating workers and ensure access to binding

arbitration so that if the parties come to an impasse, a first contract can be achieved.

Of course, we are also calling for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage to improve the quality of life for all Ontarians.

The legislation before us today deals with the education sector, which already has robust employee and professional representation. As a province, we must provide these professionals with the tools they need to do their job effectively, in part through collective bargaining.

**1630**

The legislation that the bill before us seeks to amend outlines the process for collective bargaining in the education sector. The legislation establishes a framework for two-tiered collective agreements between school boards and their employees. For bargaining at a central table, the parties are an employer bargaining agency and an employee bargaining agency. For local bargaining, the parties are a school board and a bargaining agent.

The government is required to participate in central bargaining but is not entitled to participate in local bargaining.

Bargaining in 2015 brought to light several issues with the collective bargaining framework in its current form. There were initial lengthy discussions about what items were to be discussed at the central table and what items were to be included at the local table. Some local tables just reached an agreement, over a year and a half since the negotiations began.

Of course, the government did not hesitate to impose back-to-work legislation and strip the democratic right of employees to go on strike, a move that was supported by the Conservative caucus.

I'd like to remind all members of this chamber that New Democrats were the only party that voted against the undemocratic back-to-work legislation.

Just to be clear—because the Conservatives now stand up and pretend to be the champions for labour—they supported the Liberal government in stripping teachers of their right to strike. It wasn't the first time.

It's important to point this out, because he'll say, "I didn't actually vote on Bill 103," but that's because he didn't technically have a seat in the Legislature yet: It's not surprising that the PCs, under the leadership of Patrick Brown, supported anti-union legislation.

Not too long before Bill 103, it was Premier McGuinty who forced the terms of a contract on education workers, through Bill 115. Many of the current members of the Liberal government were also members of the McGuinty government at that time and voted in favour of the legislation—including Premier Wynne. This legislation disrespected the collective bargaining process and stifled the voices of professional workers in our school classrooms.

Speaker, it's interesting. Before I came up here, I had an opportunity to watch the member from Whitby–Oshawa do his lead on this legislation, and there are some things that I would like to touch on that he said. I

wrote some notes down here. They're scribbles. It's almost like doctor writing, so I'm going to have to try and figure out what I wrote down here.

It's interesting, though, because he talked about one of the government members and how that particular member's words are on record, so we will be able to know if there are ulterior motives.

Maybe what the member from Whitby-Oshawa doesn't realize is, it's not just the Liberal members—their comments and their ideas—that are kept on record. It's also the Conservatives. Anything they say is also put on record. And you can't really outrun your own record.

So I'd like to point out that it was under Bill 115, and then subsequently Bill 103, two bills that stripped teachers of their right to strike—Bill 115 actually imposed contracts on education workers—that the Conservative caucus all supported the Liberals when it came to Bill 115 and Bill 103.

So while the Conservatives are sitting there, talking about how egregious it was that the Liberals brought in such legislation—and I'm not arguing that. I certainly never supported Bills 103 or 115. Bill 115 is one of the reasons I decided to run for provincial office. I think it's interesting that the member from Whitby-Oshawa wants to throw the Liberal record at them but totally discredit the fact that they supported the Liberals when it came to 115 and 103.

Then it's interesting, because the member from Whitby-Oshawa then went on to say that the government has failed to review and change the funding formula. I find it interesting, as I'm sure my colleague from Hamilton will—

**Mr. Paul Miller:** East-Stoney Creek.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** —from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek will agree with me. It's interesting that he would be attacking a funding formula that was brought in under a Conservative government. It was brought in, in 1998, under Mike Harris. So I don't think that they're on very solid footing to attack a funding formula that they designed.

He then went on to talk about how, over 20 years—and this is important; this number is important—the system has been underfunded to the point that there's been such a decline in the school buildings that school boards simply can't keep up with school repairs. Think about that. He said "20 years"; he actually said "20 years." Now, I know I'm still fairly new here, but I don't think the Liberals have been government for 20 years. They've been in government for the majority of that time, for the largest portion of that time, but I'm pretty sure—and I might be wrong. My colleague has been here longer than I am, but if you do the math, that means that the problem with the funding and the problem we're seeing in the downward decline of, as we used to call it in the education system, the physical plant, so the buildings, the decline that we're seeing because of the lack of funding started under the Conservatives and has only continued and escalated under the Liberals.

So again, I don't think they're on very solid footing in the PC caucus to be complaining about the funding

formula or the conditions of the buildings when it was their policies that started it, and the Liberals have just continued it. It's becoming harder and harder these days to tell the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives, frankly.

He also made the comment about Bill 115, the Putting Students First Act. He made the comment that it should have been called the "putting teachers last act." Again, I will remind the member from Whitby-Oshawa, the other members of the PC caucus and their new leader, Patrick Brown, that the Conservatives supported Bill 115. They supported, as the member from Whitby-Oshawa would like to call it, the "putting teachers last act." I would actually like to amend that and call it the "putting education workers last act." They just continued this under Bill 103; they just did the same thing under Bill 103. They stripped teachers of the right to strike.

While they would like to stand up and go on about how the Liberals don't respect education workers and how the Liberals don't respect the bargaining process, again, I would draw a parallel between the Conservatives and the Liberals. When you're supporting back-to-work legislation, anti-union legislation, you really don't have a leg to stand on and criticize somebody else. Again, New Democrats were the only ones who have consistently voted against and not supported anti-union legislation, such as Bill 115 and Bill 103.

I'd also like to point out that the majority of the comments I was hearing while watching debate were specifically around teachers, not highlighting the work that other education workers do, like ECEs, EAs, custodians, secretaries, IT technicians and so many others who work in the school system, day in and day out, to try to provide students with the safest and best education experience that they can.

I personally, on behalf of the New Democrat caucus and my leader, Andrea Horwath, would like to extend our appreciation to all education workers for everything that they do to make sure that our students are safe and our students receive the best education they can. I can tell you from what I've heard that the current government and the Conservative government prior to it didn't make the work of education workers any easier.

I'd like to review some of the provisions of Bill 115. We're going to dial it back a few years, since we are talking about collective bargaining. I want to talk about some of the provisions of Bill 115 so we can get a better sense of the government's record on negotiating with the education sector.

Bill 115 sought to limit fair, free contract negotiations and impose contracts on education workers. That's not really called "collective bargaining," when one side comes in heavy-handed and says, "You're going to do it our way and you're going to like it." That's not really fair bargaining.

At the time, the government even knew that what they were doing was wrong and tried to limit scrutiny of the bill by the courts or by the labour relations board. Bill 115 stated, "14(1) The Ontario Labour Relations Board

shall not inquire into or make a decision on whether a provision of this act, a regulation or an order made under subsection 9(2) is constitutionally valid or is in conflict with the Human Rights Code.”

**1640**

So what the government said, and again the Conservatives supported it, was, “We understand that it’s against the Human Rights Code, but we’re not going to allow the Ontario Labour Relations Board to look into it and actually deem it—put it on paper, let the public know that it’s against the Human Rights Code.” The government actually stripped the OLRB of the opportunity to do that, to stand up for workers and their human rights.

“14(2) An arbitrator or arbitration board shall not inquire into or make a decision on whether a provision of this act, a regulation or an order made under subsection 9(2) is constitutionally valid or is in conflict with the Human Rights Code.”

So we’ve taken away their right to having an arbitrator or arbitration.

It did not allow a review by a court: “15(1) No term or condition included in an employment contract or collective agreement under or by virtue of this act, process for consultation prescribed under this act, or decision, approval, act, advice, direction, regulation or order made by the minister or Lieutenant Governor in Council under this act shall be questioned or reviewed in any court.”

The Liberal government put themselves above our judicial system, and they did that with the support of the Conservatives.

“15(2) No steps shall be taken to have a court question, review, prohibit or restrain any consultation, review or approval process prescribed or initiated under this act at the minister’s or Lieutenant Governor in Council’s discretion.”

Again, you can’t take it to a court and have a court decide on whether or not this is infringing on your human rights.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** A dictatorship.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Exactly.

“15(3) Terms and conditions included in a collective agreement under or by virtue of this act shall not be questioned or reviewed by an arbitrator, an arbitration board or the Ontario Labour Relations Board, except as provided by those terms or conditions.”

Again, they stripped workers of their right to be heard. They stripped them of their right to ask for an independent officer to review what was being put before them and to be able to say that they were not comfortable with what was put before them. The government, with help from the Conservatives, put themselves before the judicial system, the OLRB and any arbitrator or arbitration in order to decide that they were actually infringing on someone’s human rights.

As we can see, the government included provisions in this bill to limit the ability of courts to scrutinize provisions that infringe on collective bargaining rights. I think education workers, parents and students are right to

be skeptical whenever this government talks about changes to collective bargaining. Don’t take my word for it, Speaker. The Ontario Superior Court ruled on this matter.

Of course, we know the level of respect that the PCs have for education workers. In 2015, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga—and again this goes back to the member from Whitby-Oshawa talking about how one of the government members’ comments were on the record and how those things can come back to get you at some point. I’d like to point out, in 2015, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, a member of the Conservative caucus, actually compared our hard-working education workers to monkeys, stating—and this is a direct quote right out of Hansard:

“The reciprocal principle behind the catchphrase ‘you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours’ is as old as the hills. Somebody does something to benefit someone else with the expectation that the benefit will be paid back, either immediately or down the road.

“Think of the line of monkeys scratching each other’s backs or in a business where perhaps a service provider engages in work for a broadcaster who, in turn, provides them ad space. But while this is an age-old practice in, say, the animal kingdom or in the business world, when this practice enters the world of politics and behind-closed-door deals with taxpayer dollars, the scratching begins to cross lines of propriety.”

At the time when that comment was made, I stood in the House and suggested that that member actually apologize to education workers for comparing them to a line of monkeys picking lice off of each other. I have yet to hear an apology from that member.

A member from the opposite side didn’t hear who that member was. She asked for clarification. It was the member from Kitchener-Conestoga who made those remarks.

Speaker, those comments go directly to the respect that we see coming from the Conservative caucus when it comes to collective bargaining and, more specifically, union members. I certainly don’t feel that anybody in the education sector deserves to be compared to monkeys, and it troubles me that anybody in this room would compare them to monkeys.

But to add to that, when you look at the services that they provide and the fact that we entrust our children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews to them every day, with the hope that they will keep them safe, that they will be a shoulder to cry on when our kids need it, to instill values and to provide an education with the limited resources that we are given, that comment, although it bugs me on many levels, bothers me even more, that somebody would compare them to monkeys.

The legislation before us today is an attempt to remedy some of the difficulties both parties faced in the last round of negotiations so that the process can be more efficient in the future. I know one of the other members of the Conservative caucus called it a mess, said that they should have gotten it right the first time, so maybe he doesn’t understand the process.

The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act originally was a collaboration, knowing that there would have to be changes made. This process that is currently in place, prior to this legislation, has a lot of problems—a lot of problems. My hope is that the government side has actually really engaged the unions that represent workers, really and in earnest engaged in conversation to get their voice into this legislation.

I do know that there are two unions that represent education workers, CUPE and AEFO, who have concerns about this legislation, valid concerns about being forced into central bargaining, because that has not happened before. They have been able to choose whether or not they wanted to engage. I hope that those concerns are going to be taken into consideration and that particular piece amended to reflect their concerns.

However, Speaker, when we look at history, when we look at Bill 103 and, prior to that, Bill 115, we see a history of both the Liberal members and the Conservative members not really respecting the voice of the education workers, not really respecting the concerns that they bring to the table.

These are the front-line workers who are in our schools every day. Their voices and their concerns should be taken into consideration and heavily weighed when we're talking about legislation like this.

I'm hoping, again, that the government side will amend the one particular area that CUPE and AEFO are expressing concerns about.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments? The member for Durham.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** You're doing a lot of talking, Granville.

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** I know. I would like to thank the member from Windsor West for her comments. You know what? I wanted to talk about the great, wonderful things we are doing in education in this province, but I keep hearing about Bill 115. We basically reversed everything that was in that bill, which was the right thing to do, right?

So if we want to talk about trampling on the rights of unions and workers, let's talk about the social contract. That ripped up every single agreement in this province. Somehow we never—

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Wasn't that Bob Rae the Liberal?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** That was Bob Rae the Liberal.

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** Bob Rae, a Liberal now? No, no, he was the NDP Premier of this province.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Excuse me. I'd like to be part of this conversation too, so if you could address your comments through the Chair, and I ask the opposition members to refrain from heckling.

The member for Durham.

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** Speaker, in the NDP's nine-page platform, the NDP had a savings and accountability minister who was responsible for slashing \$600 million from education and health care.

1650

The NDP voted against investing in child care. The NDP also voted against increasing wages for early childhood educators in this province, while we increased those wages by \$2 per hour plus benefits.

The NDP also voted against providing more than \$11 billion over the next 10 years for school infrastructure. The leader of the NDP, in their last platform, promised an embarrassing \$60 million to renovate schools. That's 4% of what we have provided. We have invested almost \$14 billion since 2003 in school infrastructure, which has resulted in 760 new schools and more than 735 additional renovations—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It's a pleasure to bring a few notes. I'll just add one to the member who just spoke: One thing that the NDP also did was that they supported the Liberal budget in 2001, which kept you in business, and actually voted for the Green Energy Act, which we're not real proud about.

There must have been a poll out perhaps, because there seemed to be a lot of anger coming from the NDP toward the Conservatives today, impugning motive about one of my colleagues. She was almost indignant about how he had said something, but she kept impugning motive the whole time about something, and he's not even in the Legislature to defend himself.

I'm going to talk about this bill for 20 minutes in my own time, but what I want to bring up is: Today we have Good Roads happening right here in the city of Toronto. The mayor of Grey Highlands is here. He has actually asked the Minister of Education at ROMA to attend Chapman's Ice Cream in Markdale and to come out to the community and see what that community is all about, because that's one of 600 schools on the chopping block as a result of this Liberal government.

Today, I'm going to formally—in Hansard again—extend on his behalf the invitation to both the Premier and the education minister. We're talking about a bit of education here. I would have hoped they would actually be talking about this, not a collective bargaining act that's just an amendment to already existing legislation.

We're going to lose schools in my riding. Currently, there are three on the chopping block. We lost another four or five last year. The member from Oshawa—not Oshawa. Where's Johnny's riding? What's Johnny O'Toole's riding?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** Durham.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** The member from Durham was just talking about all these schools that are opening. He fails to say that 600 schools are going to be closed. That's the legislation we should be talking about here today. We should be talking about why this government has wasted so much money, and now the students of our great province are paying the price, particularly in rural Ontario.

In my next 20 minutes, I'll be talking about this at length, and we'll certainly cover a lot of ground in regard to Bill 92.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've got a long memory. I do remember that in the 1990s, they used to call Mr. Harris the "Education Premier" because he slashed and attacked education. So I don't think the member should be going down that road.

In reference to the member for Durham—speaking of memories, they talk about how wonderful they are in collective agreements—I do believe that this government over here forced the professors at York University to go back to work. I believe they forced the transit workers to go back in Toronto. And they're saying they're for collective bargaining? I'm not sure about that one either.

In the reference to what the member of Durham spouted off about all the money they've spent: Guess why the NDP voted against it? Because it wasn't enough. It didn't even touch it. It didn't even dent it. That's why we voted against it.

I love it, Speaker, when they always say, "Well, you know, the NDP voted against the budget." Well, there could be 50 things in the budget that are bad and there could be two things that are good. But for the two things that are good, they make sure it's popular with the public so they can get it through and put pressure on the opposition, even though there are 50 things that are bad about it. That's why we vote against budgets.

But the public doesn't understand that, because they don't spell it out for them. They make it look like the big, bad opposition: "We're trying to help people in Ontario, and they voted against it." When you have 90% of it that's garbage, yes, we're going to vote against it every time.

I can tell you right now, I sit here and, day in and day out, I listen to the two go at it, A or B going at it both times. They're just as guilty as each other, if you just go back in the history books and take a look.

But the only party that stands up for collective bargaining and for unions is the NDP. Remember that, folks. If you really want the party that stands up for people in this province, it's the NDP, not those two. So when the next election rolls around, don't take that two-sided coin when it says "Conservative" on one side and "Liberal" on the other and flip it. You might want to try a new, orange coin, because it would be a lot better for the people of this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Helena Jaczek:** I'd just like to offer a few comments in relation to the member from Windsor West's remarks on Bill 92.

When I come to this House, I always hope that I'm going to hear some constructive comments rather than some of the historical references that have been made by the member opposite. Really, in her entire 20 minutes, I didn't hear any constructive comments as to how, perhaps, we might improve this bill.

This bill has been out there for extensive consultations. The review began in the spring of 2016. It

included, of course, the central bargaining parties. A consultation summary was posted on the minister's website, and there were further consultations this last fall, including with federations, unions, trustees' associations and all of those who had previously decided not to participate in central bargaining. This winter, most recently, the ministry conducted a third round of consultations with the federations, unions and trustees' associations to share more detail on the possible amendments.

While we may not always achieve consensus, this is a very well-thought-out bill. I really don't want to reference yet again the fact that the NDP has no plan for education. We know that in their nine-page platform in 2014, they were going to slash some \$600 million per year from both education and health care.

Our government has established a world-class educational system. We've increased education funding—an increase since we took office of 59%, and an increase in per pupil funding also.

We are a world leader in education and we have a proud record. With this particular bill, we will ensure our students have the very best education possible.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Windsor West has two minutes.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I'd like to thank the member from Durham—I'd like to; I won't—the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, and the Minister of Community and Social Services for all throwing in their two cents' worth, or two minutes' worth, in this case, for my comments on Bill 92, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act.

First to the Minister of Community and Social Services—maybe she dozed off for a second—I actually did offer a suggestion: that you listen to the concerns of CUPE and AEFO and amend the bill, taking into consideration their concerns.

I actually defended the government—that doesn't happen very often. When the Conservatives said that this bill was a mess, that the original bill was a mess and they should have been able to get it right in the first place, I actually stuck up for the government side—the minister must not have been listening at the time—when I said that actually, the idea of the bill in the first place was a collaboration among the education workers and the government, and that the idea was that as they came across issues, they would come back to the table and work to fix them. I don't think the education workers expected it to be the mess it was, but it was the understanding that the original form of the bill was something to start with and to build on as they went through the process and figured out the issues.

I find it interesting that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and then the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound both said that they think it's a waste of time to even talk about collective bargaining, that we should be talking about the education system—which I agree with; I talk about the education system all the time. I talk about what needs to be fixed in the education

system and how it's underfunded. However, although they don't think it's important enough to talk about collective bargaining and it's a waste of time, it's a pivotal piece of the education system. We need to make sure that the education workers are in classrooms where there are class caps, where the students are getting all the supports they need, that there's enough staff in the schools. So I disagree with the Conservative members that it's a waste of time to be talking about collective bargaining.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Hon. Marie-France Lalonde:** I would just like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Monsieur le Président, je suis bien fière de représenter ma communauté d'Ottawa-Orléans. I'm very happy to represent Ottawa-Orléans. In June 2014, I was elected in this wonderful Legislature, and as I went door-knocking, there was some sensitivity about education, and we realize that. We certainly all agree upon that.

1700

Lorsque j'ai rencontré les parents et les enseignants qui habitent à Orléans, je sentais un désir de travailler en partenariat avec nous. Ce que j'ai dit aux parents et aussi aux enseignants, c'était qu'on va faire ça.

We're going to do just that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to work with you to rebuild the trust. For years, our government has been a leader for the education system here in Ontario, and I felt it. I really, really felt strong in 2014. I was happy actually when we started in our Legislature to bring forward a bill—but before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I also have to say—I apologize—that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Beaches-East York. I apologize to all of you. Sorry, my colleague.

But to come back to point, Mr. Speaker: As I went door-knocking and then I subsequently came here, we introduced a bill. It was the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, which came into force in 2014. It was a new situation. It was something new for the way we do bargaining, and one thing that I remember clearly is that as we went through this process was the fact that we were going to review after what went right and the things that we could improve.

I'm quite happy, actually—je suis bien fière de voir qu'on est revenu à la table et qu'on s'est rassis avec nos employeurs et nos unions pour solidifier et discuter de comment on peut améliorer le processus de négociation ici en Ontario.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that teachers and of all our education sector do an amazing job. I see these pages here today. Je vois nos pages ici, et je remercie nos professeurs et tout le corps des enseignants et des éducateurs spécialisés qui nous aident jour après jour à améliorer et donner une fondation pour que nos jeunes aient un avenir meilleur.

I want to take the time to thank our teachers and our education workers all throughout the province for the

marvellous work they do teaching our youth for a better future.

One thing that I want to highlight is that—and I think my colleague shared a little bit of that component when she said we went through an extensive outreach, really trying to determine from whom we should get feedback. I want to just clarify, Mr. Speaker, a little bit with you. From an employer perspective, before introducing this legislation in the past year, we consulted with l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario and l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques. We also consulted with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education and our supervisory officers. We also did some outreach to the teachers' federation and education workers' union representatives, the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the Canadian Union of Public Employees—CUPE—and 14 unions representing education workers, including CAW, OPSEU and others.

What I'm trying to say is that we started this process in 2014. We knew there would be some challenges, but we were aware—and we made this aware to our partners—that we wanted to improve. And those improvements actually come in the form of this new bill, which is basically—and I'm going to have to read and use my glasses for you, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon. We really want to make the made-in-Ontario process more flexible, transparent and consistent. Ultimately, what we're looking for is promoting the students' achievement and well-being, maintaining public confidence in our publicly funded education system, and certainly continuing to foster positive and constructive relations with our partners.

Donc, monsieur le Président, je vais remercier l'engagement de notre gouvernement de retourner à la table pour améliorer notre engagement.

J'aimerais, pour conclure ma petite présentation, faire une référence que la ministre Hunter a faite : « Nous avons engagé des discussions avec nos partenaires du secteur de l'éducation en vue de renforcer les progrès réalisés au sein du système d'éducation financé par les fonds publics et de continuer à offrir aux élèves la meilleure expérience d'apprentissage possible. Chaque fois qu'une « ronde de négociations est entamée, notre objectif est de favoriser « la stabilité au sein du secteur » et de créer « des résultats concrets dont pourront bénéficier les élèves et les travailleuses et travailleurs de notre système d'éducation tout en respectant notre plan budgétaire. »

Ceci démontre encore notre engagement de consultation, de collaboration et aussi d'être très ouverts à améliorer ce système qui est nouveau ici, le « made-in-Ontario ».

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

**Hon. Laura Albanese:** Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker.

I think that one of the things I would care to highlight this afternoon is that those who ultimately will benefit from improving the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act are actually our students—Ontario's two million students and their families. These are families that rely on a strong, stable and sustainable publicly funded education system each and every day. That is the main intent of this technical bill, if you will, that we're discussing this afternoon.

The proposed legislation, I know, would amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act and improve flexibility in the system by allowing collective agreements to be extended, to support improved flexibility and stability for all parties, including students and parents.

Currently, the act sets a default term length of three years. During the extensive consultations with the sector, support has been expressed to give the minister the authority to extend agreements and also to alter the length of term of new agreements to two, four or five years. This amendment would give parties the flexibility to pursue longer agreements or extensions of agreements, which can help provide consistency and stability for all parties, as well as the families, as I mentioned. The potential for longer terms is also consistent with other jurisdictions, such as Quebec or British Columbia.

It would also add transparency. I think we all agree that Ontarians deserve a clear picture when it comes to the costs of bargaining. The proposed legislation would, if passed, make annual salary disclosure mandatory for the trustees' associations. Salary disclosure would establish clear accountability between the ministry and the trustees' association on matters related to funding, and would strengthen the public confidence in our education system.

To address the AG's recommendations to improve transparency, the legislation is also proposing to require mandatory comprehensive reporting on the total funding received from the Ministry of Education, including bargaining costs.

These amendments were also developed in response to issues that were raised by the Auditor General in her special report on government payments to education-sector unions. These proposed amendments would provide for full transparency and accountability by the trustees' associations and by the crown.

Some of the amendments, if passed, would improve consistency and efficiency in the bargaining process, including ensuring that parents and students are well informed in advance of labour disruptions by requiring an additional five days' notice for strikes, lockouts and certain circumstances. This is in addition to the five days of notice already included in the act.

1710

Mr. Speaker, I just want to elaborate for a second on that. Labour dispute action can be very disruptive for parents and for students. Under the current legislation, the parties are required to provide at least five days'

written notice in advance of any labour disruption action at either level. For example, if teachers are going to initiate work to rule, they must first provide five days of notice. However, there is no provision for providing notice upon escalation of labour disruptions; for example, when you're going from work to rule to a full strike. This proposed amendment would require five days' notice from unions before they escalate their strike action to the full withdrawal of services at a school. The same would apply to school boards that are considering a lockout. Requiring notice from federations and school boards before a full strike and/or lockout is key to ensuring that parents and students are well-informed in advance of serious labour disruption.

I would like to add that this is very important, in my opinion, from a personal point of view. I don't have kids currently in the school system. I'm already a grandmother, and I'm actually looking forward to the time when my two grandchildren will be in school. But I can recall when my kids were going to school during the Harris years. My son didn't have any after-school activities for the whole length of high school. That was difficult. That was one of the reasons that, in the end, also determined my interest in provincial politics, because the education system at the time was really in a shambles. There was strike after strike, and the children were the ones that were suffering the most. I still remember that.

At this point in time, when time has gone by and I now have two grandchildren, a boy and a girl, too young yet to join in the system, I hope that we continue to strengthen it. This is a step to do that, toward that direction. Nothing is perfect, but we have to continue to strive to improve our system in the best way possible so that our future generations, our young generations, are the ones that can benefit from a system that works, that is safe and that is sustainable.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Beaches—East York.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** It gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill 92, improving the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Since we, on this day, had the opportunity for the inaugural speech of our colleague from Ottawa—Vanier, I want to go back to this whole concept of inaugural speeches, because I want to talk a bit about mine. I was reminiscing with her later on. During my inaugural speech, I talked at length about how I found it a little weird that we call them maiden speeches. I want to note that the member never used that expression all the way through. I was very proud of her for that, not going back to that old, archaic, traditional term and, instead, stating, in French, that it was her inaugural speech. In my case, with the sports references, I like to call it the rookie speech, which is what I used in my remarks.

If I go back to my speech, you will remember, Speaker—and I know you were listening attentively at the time when I did my inaugural speech—that I actually have a master's degree in labour relations from Queen's

University, a great institution. So collective bargaining is something I know a little bit about. I had the opportunity to consult in the field for numerous years with the Central Ontario Industrial Relations Institute and assist the parties in collective bargaining. And I taught labour relations up at Seneca for a number of terms. These are things I covered in my inaugural speech. I don't want to go into them in great detail, but just to set the framework that I actually know a little bit about this stuff. I'm absolutely delighted to be able to bring some of that experience to the House today.

Particularly, I find it very interesting that this is a bill that emanates from the Ministry of Education, because what we're in fact talking about here is labour relations. Labour relations is typically governed by another ministry entirely, the Ministry of Labour, which sets the framework, typically, for collective bargaining in Ontario. Under the provincial scheme, particularly in industrial collective bargaining, where you end up—before you go on strike, you have conciliation, you have mediation and such.

In the old days of education bargaining, we had a thing called the Education Relations Commission, which provided much the same function as the conciliation offices of the Ministry of Labour but it situated underneath the Ministry of Education. We still have that body, the Education Relations Commission, but its role now is to assess undue harm for students when the parties are in a lockout or a strike situation. The Education Relations Commission will say, "Is a student's year in jeopardy?" before making a call back to whether or not the parties should continue in that work stoppage situation.

This was an important issue for me when I was running in 2014, because we had just come out of that very tumultuous bargaining based on Bill 115. I went door to door and met with so many teachers who were upset with our government for having disrupted the collective bargaining system.

Once again, I want to state very categorically in this House that I am a great fan of the collective bargaining process. I protect and respect collective bargaining as an important democratic institution, and we very, very much must protect it.

What we had under the old system, when I actually trained as an Education Relations Commission fact-finder and qualified—

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Oh, you're a fact-finder.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** I never went on to become—because the fact-finders, in those days, at the ERC used to go out and find out from the parties what the issues were to see if they were manageable, before you could go out and take collective action: strikes or walkouts. That was the old strategy. What we used to see at the collective bargaining, board by board by board across the province, were all these dysfunctional aspects of employees whipsawing or boards hanging out, waiting for some other settlement. It was so dysfunctional. It took so long to get bargaining going in a consistent way.

At the time, it made more sense to do board-by-board bargaining because the education rate was on the mill rate at the municipal level. So you're raising money locally; the idea is that you should be spending it locally. But the reality is, we decided that now we are not putting the education rate on the mill rate. It is a government of Ontario function to provide the per-student funding. Now it makes sense that we have province-wide bargaining, because in essence we're the ones holding the purse strings. That's why we do have that central bargaining.

As we moved out of the old system and we went into the new system of collective bargaining, we knew—and I want to point out how it was our Premier, our Minister of Education at the time, who fixed the problems associated with the dysfunctionality that came out of Bill 115, which was a dysfunction that had risen over the years from the previous system. We brought a new framework in for local and general bargaining, which looks like it actually kind of worked. We had some disruptions. It was the first time out of the gate with it. Both the Premier and the ministry committed that they would review the provisions of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act to see if there are other ways we can improve it, because there were dysfunctions in how people were getting used to what areas are local or what is general. So it was very important that we take a look at it, and that's what we've done.

No one in the House should be at all surprised that we are going to improve the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act as a result of that initiative. We've had the experience of the last round of collective agreements. I'm delighted that we have agreements with pretty much every partner. I'm not sure if there are one or two still that we're working on, but we're in very good shape. We're waiting for some ratifications. So we've had some success under the old system. What we're seeing here, as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration outlined, is that ultimately we're going to make improvements, because it's for the kids.

I remember in grade 13—when there was a grade 13; that tells you how old I am—we had a four-month strike in our school board. The disruption of almost a half of my year and not getting that grade 13 education—look what it has left me qualified for.

Anyway, Speaker, thank you very much. I look forward to having all-party support for this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Speaker, I listened intently to the three members on the Liberal benches share 20 minutes for their comments on Bill 92. Regardless of who I listened to, there was one word that came to mind in each one of them, and I think that represents what we heard here today: Utter codswallop is what we heard today on Bill 92.

**1720**

Listening to the member for Beaches—East York at the end—"It's another improvement." Another improvement? We heard those terms with Bill 115. We heard

those terms with Bill 122. They're improving the Labour Relations Act for teachers.

Well, you would think that they were beyond perfection at the moment, with all the improvements that they've done over the years, because without a doubt, every session of Parliament, we get a new labour act for teachers, a new collective bargaining arrangement for teachers.

We had 115, which, of course—as the member for Beaches—East York mentioned, he had to go out and swallow his pride and advocacy of collective bargaining after that iteration.

But let's not forget the \$2 million that we found out when the Minister of Education provided the OSSTF with \$2 million to buy pizza and beer, to help them with their negotiations.

**Interjection:** No one said anything about beer.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Well, maybe not beer. But it was undocumented. It was undocumented, and it was to help the teachers negotiate with the very minister who gave them \$2 million.

Perfection is—

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** The former speaker—I'd just like to say that I think he used the word “cogswallow” or something. It seems to have continued over to that side. I don't know what happened.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Codswallop.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** “Cogswallow.” Whatever he called it.

In reference to the first two speakers on the Liberal side, they made some valid points. Certainly, I don't agree with all of it.

My favourite speaker, from Beaches—East York, spoke about his dedication to proper bargaining and very respectful bargaining. He stated his past performance and his educational background in labour studies and all that. Well, I'm not sure if he missed Labour 101—he might have, when it comes to respecting collective bargaining—because I don't think he would have voted for Bill 115, if that's the case.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** I wasn't here.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Whatever. If you weren't here, I'm sure that was one of your nomination promises.

But in reference to his experience, it's good to know that somebody over there did something in the past that was related to labour studies.

Over here, on our side, we've got a ton of experience, I think, with unions. Mr. Gates, from Niagara Falls, and myself, we've spent a total combination of probably 65 years in union negotiations and arbitration and all that, probably long before you were doing it. So we know a little bit about it too, and we don't agree with everything you said.

I'd just like to bring that to the forefront, that there certainly are two different perspectives when it comes to

bargaining and collective unions, from two different groups.

I feel that there's not much difference, with all due respect, from the Liberals or the Conservatives when it comes to respecting unions and their rights. You put on a good show, but, really, you do what's best for the Liberal Party.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Granville Anderson:** I thank my colleagues and all the members opposite who have spoken towards this bill here this afternoon.

My colleagues actually brought what the bill should be about back into focus. It's about making improvements, making amendments that improve this bill.

Bill 92 was always going to come back for review—that was the understanding—and improvements. So that's what has happened. It's not a bill that has been out there for 10 or 15 years. It's a bill whose inception came into being about two or three years ago, maybe four years ago by now. So the improvements are there, and that's what the amendments propose to do to improve the bill.

There is a component in this bill that affords for transparency so that we can follow the recommendations of the AG, so we won't hear comments that money is being used for beer and pizza when that's not factual. That's what transparency is all about. We agree that Ontarians deserve a clear picture when it comes to the cost of bargaining, and the option providing for the total funding they receive from the Ministry of Education.

I am a great supporter of collective bargaining and of unions. But on this side of the House, we have to find a balance. We also have to look at what is in the best interests of students and parents who fund the education system. We have a responsibility to do that, in addition to making sure that bargaining is fair and transparent, and address the issues that accommodate and benefit—for us, it has to be a win-win situation for all sides. That's how we look at collective bargaining and the whole bargaining—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to comment on Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes, and the speeches from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Citizenship and Immigration, and the member from Beaches—East York.

This bill explains, in the explanatory note, “Currently, the act prohibits parties from entering into agreements to continue the term of operation of a collective agreement. The bill adds provisions to permit such agreements in the specified circumstances.” Really, I think, the bill seems mainly about extending contracts beyond the next election as has been negotiated by the government. We'll get a chance to talk about it in caucus tomorrow.

What is missing from the bill, certainly, and I'm sure the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will bring it

up in his upcoming speech, is talk about all of the school closures that are going on around the province, particularly in rural Ontario. I know he has talked about some 600 closures. The government has changed the ARC process to speed up the closures.

Certainly, in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, one that is really concerning is in the village of Honey Harbour, in the southwest corner of my riding, which really isn't close to anywhere. There's an ARC review going on for both the public school and the Catholic school, so the danger is that the community will lose both schools. It's not close to anywhere. It's a minimum one-hour bus ride for these primary-age students, and that would be devastating for the village of Honey Harbour. If you lose both schools, what young family is going to move there? What businesses would be able to operate there? It would be absolutely devastating.

The solution that the community is pushing for is co-location of both schools in one building. I hope that the government will support that, and that they keep a school in Honey Harbour, as it is absolutely vital for the community.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That is four questions and comments. One of the government members can reply.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** I'm delighted to get an opportunity—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I want to hear Granville again.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** Oh, sit down. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington had a chance to say a few words. Cogswallow, I think he called it.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Codswallop.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** Hogswallow. But I do appreciate that, as he's wont to do on the Internet at times and Twitter, at least when I'm engaging with debate with him, he doesn't refer to me as a d##?. I think that's very appreciated.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Did he really?

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** Oh, yes. I can show you the link.

The comments from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: I have great respect for the time he spent in collective bargaining as an expert in the field, but as you've got to appreciate, he only represented one side of the equation. There is another side of the equation. That would be the employer's side of the equation. He's only ever represented the one side. Then there's the neutral part.

I've had that experience of working in the neutral and on the management side at great length. I hope that we can engage more to find out a way we can find—because what this bill does is it provides that right, neutral balance to make the program work.

The member from Durham: He has found his voice today, Speaker. I don't know if you've noticed. He's on fire—got to appreciate all of the things he had to say.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who quite candidly—Speaker, I think you should pay close attention to this, and you should ignore the heckles and the ramblings going on the far side. You should pay close

attention to the fact that he's just alerted you to the fact that the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound plans to get up and do a 20-minute speech about school closures. That has nothing to do with this bill, Speaker.

1730

I want you to have the formulations going on in your head when the Clerk comes up and gives you advice, because we'll have to stand up on that occasion and say, "Out of order, Speaker." This has nothing to do with school closures. This is about a collective bargaining process. You can rant all you want about school closures, but it would be out of order on this bill. I sincerely hope the member has a lot more material, because if that's all he's got to talk about, he'll be out of order; and we want to hear him say good, positive things about our government.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I'd like to start by offering my congratulations to the member from Ottawa–Vanier, who delivered her maiden speech today. It's a pleasure to have her across the aisle and I wish you all the very best of success.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of stuff to cover in my speech today. The member from Beaches–East York actually—and I'm going to quote—said there's a commission still in the government that is charged with making sure there is no undue harm to students. So I am going to talk a little bit of what he talked about in his former comments.

You would hope that when they're talking about closing 600 schools, there will be no undue harm. But I would guess—and one of my concerns is that if we keep closing 600 schools, we're going to have a lot less need to do collective bargaining. There won't be a need to do collective bargaining because there isn't going to be anybody left employed in those—

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Beaches–East York on a point of order.

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** I absolutely do not believe there is anything in this bill about school closures and the member wants to talk about school closures. It has nothing to do with this bill. It's off-topic. He can spin it any way he wants, but that has nothing to do with this bill. I would ask you to rule accordingly.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you for your assistance. I appreciate it very much. At the same time, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has just gotten started. He hasn't even gotten a minute into his speech.

This is an education bill. It specifically addresses the issue of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has the floor.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** As I was saying in my opening remarks, if we close 600 schools, there's going to be a lot less need for collective bargaining, because there are going to be that many less people teaching and employed in our schools out there.

Mr. Speaker, I will move on; I'll come back to that in a little bit.

The original bill passed in 2014 did not require central bargaining. Bill 92, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, changes that so that the first tier of collective bargaining must participate in central bargaining, strike or lockout notice, including education workers in collective agreements; and bridges conflicts or inconsistencies between central and local terms of collective agreements. Also, centralized bargaining must always occur first, and every employee in the union and every school board must be represented by a collective bargaining union.

The union must have over 60 employees to be at the bargaining table. If there are under 15 employees, then they must join a union that has a collective bargaining agency to be at the negotiating table.

The bill also allows the minister to extend the duration of current agreements by a period of two, four or five years. An additional five days' notice of any change of a strike or lockout that would result in complete withdrawal of instruction, services or total closures of one or more schools of a board—I'm talking about school closures, Mr. Speaker. It's right there in their words. I think I'm on target. I think I'm on topic.

The bill requires school boards to provide updates on the progress of local bargaining. I'm also going to talk, in a little bit, about the local bargaining that could be happening with communities to keep those schools open.

Trustee associations will be added to the sunshine list. Trustees are also required to report the use of public funds received.

There is no question that the Liberal government's two-tier bargaining system has been a failure, creating chaos for children and parents. Everything this government has done in education, they've bungled. In reviewing the education minister's lead-off speech, I was interested to read how she would spin the years of bungling. As expected, the speech included a lot of spin about the state of the education system under this Liberal government. In her speech, the minister promised this would "strengthen our made-in-Ontario approach to bargaining in the education sector ... flexibility, transparency and ... consistency." She also stated that the new School Boards Collective Bargaining Act benefits "Ontario's two million students and their families, all of whom rely on a strong, stable and sustainable publicly funded education system each and every day." And she promised "a flexible, transparent and consistent process going forward" and to work with "our partner trustee associations."

Funny thing: I have yet to speak to a parent who would actually agree with the accolades this minister gave her Liberal Party in her lead-off speech. At a time when they're shuttering schools, cutting special-education funding and relying on parent fundraising and private donations to schools more than ever before, who are you going to believe about what's going on in our current education system? Let's debunk some of the myths from this minister's lead-off speech.

The minister said that Ontarians should be proud of the state of their education system. She called it "one of the most revered ... education systems in the world." A lot of students and families, especially north of Toronto, would like to remind the minister that there are two tales to this system. For most students outside of Toronto, it's a different story, one that this minister is either unfamiliar with or is refusing to tell.

This is where I am going to talk about school closures, because it does have a significant part in regard to this legislation. The ministry's accommodation review process, used by boards to accommodate students, is flawed and lacks transparency and accountability. It also fast-tracks closures. They actually took out the community impact portion from the last ARC review process to this review process. That tells me that they really didn't really want to listen. They didn't want to give communities a chance to collaborate and find solutions to keep these schools open. They wanted to expedite it so that they could actually get their budget savings in the bank for them for the next budget.

As a result, as many as 600 schools across Ontario are under threat of closure—600, Mr. Speaker. They bill themselves as the education party, and yet there are 600 schools under threat of closure. There is nothing "revered" about shutting down hundreds of community schools across Ontario. Does the minister agree with that?

I don't know about members opposite, but I find the 600 school closures to be a statistic that's very troubling. I find it extremely disappointing that this minister and this Liberal government would slam the door on all of these children and communities, people who were promised a better education system and who have every reason to expect it from the Liberals.

When I look at a piece of legislation like this, my first priority is actually the kids, the students, the future—those pages in front of you, if they lost their school. We need to ensure that we have the schools open, which allows us to actually have collective bargaining opportunities and to be able to make sure that there's fair and equitable remuneration for those people in those schools and in those facilities. I won't apologize for making that my absolute clear priority, because this is about the lifeblood of our community. This is about the next generation. This is about ensuring that our communities can thrive and survive in the future, and I'll always put the children first and those needs first.

Yes, maybe, in some of my remarks earlier, I got fairly excited about this, but this is critical. If those schools close, that decimates our communities. We will never, ever recover from these. They can spout all the things they want about programming, but at the end of the day, education is not just a school. It's not just the four walls of a facility. It's the whole educational component and the whole educational process.

In my case, the Bluewater District School Board has 53 schools: 42 elementary and 11 secondary. As many as 18 of those may be closed in the next 15 years. That's a

third of our school space. In 2016-17, the closures included Owen Sound Collegiate and Vocational Institute, Bayview Public School, Sydenham Community School, Dufferin Elementary School and Derby Public School. Currently under review and pending are Beavercrest Community School, Chesley District Community School and Paisley Central School.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier in my remarks that the mayor of Grey Highlands, Paul McQueen, is here in Toronto today. He issued at ROMA a couple of weeks ago an invitation to both the Premier and the minister to visit. So let's have some collective bargaining. Let's have some discussions with the people who actually are going to be impacted the most by these school closures.

I'm issuing that invitation to them again, to take him up on his invitation to come and visit, to truly see what these closures are going to do, to see that they actually can—there is no time ever running out to make the right decision, to reverse their decision, to put a moratorium on school closures until we can do that. That will have a ripple effect to collective bargaining, because those people will actually still have jobs if we have the schools still open. I can't fathom that a piece of legislation, when you're talking about closing 600 schools, is not going to have some impact on collective bargaining.

If anything, Ontarians want and need better accountability from the education minister over her rampant school closures and more transparency to deal with funding, closures and declining enrolment.

There has been labour unrest. In 2015, over 70,000 students underwent the longest teacher strike in 25 years, after more than 70,000 high school students were kept from class for weeks. What is so “revered” about being locked out of class for a month, I ask the education minister?

Special education cuts: Just in the last few years, 38 school boards had to cut their student special education funding to the tune of—guess what?—\$22 million, with 50 in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound alone.

Parents are being forced to fundraise for basic needs, including school repairs. More schools are relying on parent-led fundraising money and developer payoffs to finance needs than ever before, creating a gap between the have and have-not neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

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In Toronto alone, fundraising brings in \$20 million a year, most of it coming from parents in wealthier areas. This is a funding gap that this government has allowed to be created and one that puts students in wealthier areas at an advantage for extracurricular programs, such as lunchtime yoga, magic classes and professional vocal coaches, as well as for building sports fields and playgrounds, while students in poorer areas struggle to pay for basic nutrition programs. What is so revered about this funding gap for students whose parents are not able to pitch in thousands of dollars for school fundraising?

Access to full-day kindergarten: This government is wasting money when we need to fund full-day kindergarten. We need to fund class sizes. This is what this

government promised. Instead, they're putting students at risk. Does the minister know that the lack of space has forced schools to warehouse four- and five-year-old children? My office has heard from parents across Ontario whose children were in a kindergarten class of 50 kids and where everyone wore earmuffs to block out the noise. I wonder what exactly the minister would deem “revered” about that learning environment, Mr. Speaker.

Higher test scores and standardized testing: We hear it all over the place. The minister and Liberal government have been spinning their message of higher test scores in reading, writing and math. But we're hearing from actual teachers, saying that they don't agree with it and they don't support it. They want to ensure that each student is individual and gets the best program that they can, not standardized scores. The money that they spend on that that could be going to the front line for those kids is absolutely astronomical—not the investment that most people are talking to me about it actually want.

When was the last time this minister sat down with a math teacher and looked at the math proficiency of our grade 3 and grade 6 students? The fact is, math scores have been declining for years, and most schools haven't improved. Ontario desperately needs a strong focus on basic math skills and financial literacy in the classroom. Sadly, with the deficits that this government is running and the debt that they're carrying and continue to, our students are going to need even more math literacy to be able to understand how they're going to survive in our world going forward. The truth is, the Wynne Liberals have watched enrolment decline for years and they have failed to adequately prepare for this change. Instead of having a credible plan to turn local schools into community hubs, this government has 600 schools potentially on the chopping block.

In the two elections that I've fought, they committed to looking at and reviewing and fixing the funding formula so that it would actually ensure that our communities could move forward, that we actually would continue to have schools in our communities so that the kids are getting the education they deserve. Yet they've done nothing with that funding formula. They're talking about things like collective bargaining so that we're not talking about the bigger issues, so we're not talking about school closures and so we're not actually holding them to account for the damage they're doing to our children, to our education and, frankly, to our province and our country.

We will continue to reach out to families, students and teachers, and we'll listen carefully to their feedback on any proposed legislation that comes through here in regard to education.

I have a couple of letters here, Mr. Speaker. One was penned collectively between myself and my colleague Lisa Thompson in October 2016. It was addressed to Minister Hunter, talking today about those closures of schools and concerned about what that impact is going to be—and there is going to be a ripple effect to that collective bargaining piece of legislation here because

there are going to be a lot less people that we're talking to and there are going to be a lot less people sitting there asking to have collective bargaining, because that's where we're going. We talk about collaboration. We talk about collective discussion and collaborating and making sure that we're listening to the people we've been elected to serve.

In my case, with the Markdale school in particular, Chapman's Ice Cream has stepped up and said, "We'll collaborate. We'll partner with you. We'll figure out a way with you to keep this school," because they expect to expand. They want those students of today to have jobs tomorrow in their home community, if that's what they so choose. They'll come to the table and they'll bargain. Whether it's collectively or collaboratively—whatever word you want to use—Chapman's is prepared to do that.

Bruce Power—thinking about the Paisley school. There's already a Four County Labour Market Planning Board for Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth that suggests that access to a good school helps with finding and retaining good workers in the community. This government has actually—and I give them credit: They've actually committed to rebuilding, re-tubing and refurbishing Bruce nuclear—six units of the nuclear plant. That's going to be great for our hydro. Obviously, we need some relief from hydro prices with the way that they currently are. Nuclear is going to continue to play a key role in that. We're going to need those workers. We're going to need to have schools in those communities that are actually going to be growing because of the workforce that's going to move in to do those. There, again, we've said, "Come to the table. Come in and actually do some bargaining. Come in and consult and work with our communities."

Since being appointed the education minister, the minister has tried to shift the blame for decisions about which schools to close onto local trustees, but everyone knows that it's this government. It is their agreement that they're actually enforcing. They've shortened accommodation reviews. Their 13-year-long—14 years almost, now—mismanagement and high debt are the real reasons behind these mass closures. It's definitely something that needs to be addressed. We went back again, in November 2016, to the Minister of Education and asked, "Please put a moratorium on this."

Minister, it's never too late to do the right thing. Take a step backwards. Ensure that you're not decimating communities. It's the educational impact, absolutely; but it's the whole ripple effect to a community, particularly a single-school community, where you actually are taking a facility, a community centre, a community hub—and they've actually used language themselves to be able to want to do that, but yet the action doesn't follow.

The minister's response in question period one day said, "Solutions will not be found at Queen's Park." This only perpetuates these broad challenges. Ontarians feel that you do not wish to be engaged in a broader dialogue about the negative impact of shuttering schools across hundreds of communities in rural and northern Ontario.

Moreover, your response is also in direct opposition to the Premier's stated promise "to apply open government principles to problem solving." So I ask: How is it that you want the government to hide from the opportunity to work on solutions when this goes directly against the principles of supporting civic participation and greater collaboration between government and citizens of Ontario?

When the minister was originally elected, she championed civic engagement. She promised to be the one who would listen to the concerns of communities. However, the minister, I do believe, sincerely wants to still do the right thing. And so, in that spirit, my letter was asking her to step out, to actually step back from the discussion and the decision that's already been made, and actually open the discussion back up with those communities to ensure that we can actually do that.

In the words of the Premier: "to remove barriers, and provide the tools and information they need to innovate and meet evolving community needs." That may not be collective bargaining in the sense of some of the legislation that we're talking about today, but it's open bargaining, it's transparent bargaining that is engaging all the people that are going to have an impact in our communities.

We have, in regard to this very specific piece of legislation, a letter that is co-authored by ACÉPO, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques. They are saying in here:

"Notably, during each of the subsequent consultations all four trustee/school board associations articulated their firm commitment to sequenced bargaining. It was our shared understanding that the crown also saw value in such an amendment, as a manner by which to provide greater stability within the sector. It is regrettable that such an amendment, which we firmly believe to be in the best interests of students, is no longer being considered by the crown."

"Secondly, we are concerned that the proposed amendments do not reflect the ability to decrease the number of central bargaining tables. Moreover, as proposed, the amendment could, at some point, result in greater, not fewer, central bargaining tables."

"Finally, we continue to express our deep concern with respect to the crown's unwillingness to address the possibility of continuous sanctions within the sector simultaneously at both the central and local level. This concern is now further exacerbated given the proposed amendment to the structure of the act which would allow for the possibility of collective agreements expiring at different times. Accordingly, the education sector could find itself in a state of perpetual sanction. We firmly believe that this is not in the best interest of students and has the real possibility of eroding public confidence in the publicly funded education system."

"We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this...."

So they have, again, reached out and said, “Government, step back. Even with this piece of legislation, there are concerns that we have here. There are concerns that you’re not taking into account.”

I think it behooves the government, on anything that’s dealing with education, to do the right thing, to make sure that they’re actually doing that. In this case, some amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act—the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014, provides that collective bargaining for collective agreements under the act may include central bargaining but is not required to include it. It changes the collective bargaining by requiring that centralized bargaining must always occur first, and that every employee in a union and every school board must be represented by a collective bargaining unit. The union must have over 60 employees to be at the bargaining table. If there are under 15 employees, then they must join a union that has a collective bargaining agency to be at the negotiating table.

We’re pleased that the government actually is finally acting on the AG’s recommendations after years of inaction. It’s crucial, though, that any changes made to the collective bargaining process be fair and reasonable to all employees and taxpayers.

I’m going to close where I started: All of this is about people. In this case, education should always start and stop with the children. It’s a fundamental premise that you need places of education, particularly in small, rural, single-school communities—how imperative it is that those schools remain, that they actually have the ability to have an education in their home community, not putting three-, four- or five-year-old kids on buses for an hour and a half one way, Mr. Speaker. We need to do that as part of any bargaining. That has to be central to any bargaining and any discussion we’re going to have.

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Six hundred schools is a threat to our kids, to our future and to our province. We’ve asked the government many, many times over the last two years to step back. Just stop today and put in a moratorium. Don’t close any. Let’s have further consultation. Let’s bring people to the table and actually find a bargaining system that is going to work to allow those schools to remain in those communities, to thrive, survive and be sustainable in the future.

It is my hope that they will look at bargaining in a different light. It won’t just be about money and it won’t be about rights. It will be about kids and the benefits that the kids should get from a truly exceptional education system here in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions or comments?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I’d like to thank the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his comments on Bill 92, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act. Again, it’s important to recognize that the original bill that came forward, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, was a collaboration. It was always meant

as a starting point to figure out what works and what doesn’t work, and to be amended. That was always the intention of it. I don’t think that education workers, when they came to the table and helped draft that, expected to have the number of problems that they face.

One of the biggest problems they faced was not having a government partner at the bargaining table. I don’t think they thought that was going to be an issue. I don’t think they expected that some of the lowest earners in the education sector would be threatened with having their pay docked if they did their job exactly as was described. All they were saying is, “We’re not going to go above and beyond like we normally do. We’re going to do the work we’ve always done, the work that’s expected of us, but we’re not going to go above and beyond.” They were actually threatened to have their pay docked for that. Certainly, that wasn’t part of what they had agreed to in the beginning.

I just want to be clear, though, because the Conservative members seem to be confused about what the bill initially was about. It was always about a starting point and learning from it, and adjusting it so that it works for all parties.

Unfortunately, under the legislation that is before us, to amend that act, it doesn’t work for CUPE or AEFO. They have expressed concerns, so I implore the government to come back to them and find out how amendments can be made to make it more palatable.

That being said, I agree with the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. There is not enough funding in the system; there is not. It’s grossly underfunded. Schools are being closed at an alarming rate thanks to the government shortening the process for that, but it was a PC government that started this funding formula to begin with.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I am very pleased to comment on Bill 92, which is an act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I thought I would actually speak a little bit about what’s in the act because, of course, the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound didn’t really do that, so I thought I would.

The original act set out a default length for the length of the collective agreement of three years. It did allow for people to have some flexibility by mutual consent, but I think you can understand that in a bargaining framework where the bargaining mandate was a net-zero collective agreement, the unions didn’t have much of an appetite to go beyond three-year collective agreements. In fact, all of the agreements from the first round of bargaining are third-year collective agreements.

What the amendments do is, certainly, allow for initial collective agreements to be two, three, four or five years, but they also allow for the extension of collective agreements. I’d like to congratulate the Minister of Education, who has, in fact, negotiated two-year extensions to all of the collective agreements.

While it’s true that in the first round of bargaining, generally speaking, the teacher collective agreements

were achieved first, in this round of bargaining, it's notable that the CUPE extension representing education workers was actually the first agreement to be negotiated. So in this round, the education workers were actually first to the table. I think that's a credit to the education workers, and also the Minister of Education, that everybody is important in the system. It doesn't matter whether you're a teacher or an education worker; everybody is important.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound on his advocacy for rural Ontario. Certainly, we do not have that across the floor on the government side. There are many examples of how they're ignoring rural Ontario on some of the issues going on out there.

I would also like to congratulate him for his record in his community. Most members know, I believe, that he may be considered Mr. Groundhog during the Wiarton Willie Festival that's held in Wiarton. I've been there a number of times myself. It shows what a community can do when they get together to make an event successful. Unfortunately, closing rural schools doesn't help that. Communities disappear and people move away, and the member has been a great advocate of having a really close look at what this government is doing concerning rural Ontario.

It would also be helpful if this government would try to fashion legislation that has a beneficial plan not only to the populated areas of Ontario but all of Ontario, which includes rural Ontario. They try to keep changing labour bills such as this without really looking at the full picture. So here we are again, discussing a bill to do with labour and negotiations with labour. This is certainly not the first time. I've only been here just over five years, and it's not the first time this has happened. It's too bad that the government couldn't fashion some of these bills.

Another thing I was wondering about, Speaker—it's kind of a question. I don't know how much pizza was eaten at the last negotiations; I wonder how much is going to be eaten at the next negotiations. It's just incredible how that works.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** You don't have to. We don't want to impose on you.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I've been up so many times today, I feel like Johnny Jump Up here.

In reference to the member of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, he certainly made some good points about the situation in northern schools, in the northern areas, which he represents. It comes from his heart and there's some factual information there. But I must remind him—and I have the greatest respect for him—that it was his illus-

trious leader, Mr. Harris, that was called the "Education Premier"—which was a bit of a fiasco, a bit of a sarcastic comment he was accused of. He actually decimated the education system in this province, as well as brought in the funding formula, which, I might add, has been a complete disaster. But in all fairness to him, the present government has had many years to change the funding formula, and they haven't.

The biggest complaint I get from school boards, the biggest complaint I get from trustees, from teachers—everybody—is the funding formula. Until you change the funding formula, you're not going to correct the problems in this province when it comes to education. You can bargain all you like. You can have central bargaining, which I don't agree with. There are some points where local bargaining is effective, especially the support workers in education. They need some avenues to be able to bring forward their criteria, and you can't do that in central bargaining because central bargaining will be focused on the larger unions and, most likely, the teachers they have to deal with. So the caretakers, the secretaries and the support people in schools won't have a voice, centrally, to speak of. I think the government will be distracted with their concerns and will be focusing on the bigger concerns of the big unions. So I think that when they say they like to involve everyone, that's not quite true. They're not involving everyone.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound can reply.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Thank you to all the members who spoke: Perth—Wellington, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Windsor West and the President of Treasury Board.

I'm going to start with the President of Treasury Board, because, sadly, she was the minister who orchestrated the closure of the 600 schools that we're talking about and yet gave \$2 million to the folks on the other side of the table, bargaining against her, to be able to go out and buy pizza and help them with their negotiation. There was no \$2 million that came to the two schools that are closing in my riding, to say, "How can we help you out? How can we ensure community impact"—which my colleague from Perth—Wellington was talking about, what can happen when a community bands together.

He talked about advocacy for rural Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to do that, but I want to emphasize that advocating for rural Ontario means a stronger Ontario, period. Agriculture is in rural Ontario. One of the schools that's going to close, perhaps, or a change is going to be the high-skills major for a specialty in agriculture. Where does our food come from, Mr. Speaker? It's fundamental back to that and our education is fundamental back to our communities.

In 2016, Minister Sandals insisted that any wage increases were offset by cuts made elsewhere in the education system. We raised that flag. We hoped at that time that changes such as that did not result from classroom cuts and resources for teachers. We actually said that we welcomed measures that give parents additional notice of school closures due to labour disputes and those types of

things. Sadly, because of mismanagement and bungling over the last number of years, we're at a point where we're closing schools.

The members from Perth—Wellington, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and Windsor West talked about the funding formula. The Liberals committed in two elections to review the funding formula for schools, particularly rural and northern schools. Mr. Speaker, they broke a promise. How can we trust them with anything when something as fundamental as education—when they pride themselves on supposedly being the education party but will not even

address something that now is decimating communities across this province? It will come at some point. There is definitely growth in the city, so they're not as much challenged now, but they will get that.

At the end of the day, what we really want is to ask for a moratorium on school closures.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*





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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity-Spadina	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
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Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
<b>Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)</b>	Ottawa-Orléans	
<b>Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)</b>	Peterborough	
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<b>MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)</b>	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton-Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga-Brampton South / Mississauga-Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
<b>Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)</b>	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
<b>Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)</b>	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
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Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport

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<b>Miller, Paul (NDP)</b>	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)</b>	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
<b>Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)</b>	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
<b>Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)</b>	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
<b>Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)</b>	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
<b>Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)</b>	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
<b>Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)</b>	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
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